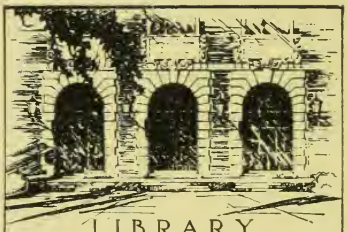

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MRS. HALLIBURTON'S TROUBLES.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD,

AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE," "THE CHANNINGS," ETC.

"This life of ours is a wild æolian harp of many a joyous strain,
But under them all there runs a loud perpetual wail, as of souls in pain.
* * * * *
All through life there are wayside inns, where man may refresh his soul with love;
Even the lowest may quench his thirst at rivulets fed by springs from above."

LONGFELLOW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
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MRS. HALLIBURTON'S TROUBLES.

CHAPTER I.

A SUGGESTED FEAR.

One morning in April, towards the middle of it, Mrs. Halliburton went up to Mr. Ashley's. She had brought the quarter's rent.

'Will you allow me to pay it to yourself, sir—now, and in future?' she asked. 'I feel an unconquerable aversion to have further dealings with Mr. Dare.'

'I can understand that you should have,' said Mr. Ashley. 'Yes, you can pay it to me, Mrs. Halliburton. Always remembering, you know, that I am in no hurry for it,' he added with a smile.

'Thank you. You are very kind. But I must pay as I go on.'

He wrote the receipt and handed it to her. 'I hope you are satisfied with William,' she said, as she folded it up.

'Quite so. I believe he gives satisfaction to Mr. Lynn. I have little to do with him myself. Mr. Lynn tells me that he finds him a remarkably truthful, open-natured boy.'

'You will always find him that,' said Jane. 'He is getting more reconciled to the manufactory than he was at first.'

'Did he not like it at first?'

'No, he did not. He was disappointed altogether. He had hoped to find some employment more suitable to the way in which he had been brought up. He cannot divest himself of the idea that he is looked upon as on a level with the poor errand boys of your establishment, and therefore has lost caste. He had wished also to be in some office—a lawyer's, for instance—where the hours of leaving are early, so that he might have had the evening for his studies. But he is growing more reconciled.'

'I suppose he wished to continue his studies?'

'He did so, naturally. The foundation of a superior education has been laid, and he expected it was to go on to completion. His brothers are now in the college school, occupied all day long with their studies, and of course William feels the difference. He gets to his books for an hour when he returns home in an evening, but he is weary, and does not do much good.'

'He appears to be a more persevering, thoughtful boy than are some,' remarked Mr. Ashley.

'Very thoughtful—very persevering. It has been the labour of my life, Mr. Ashley, to foster the good seed in my children; to reason with them, to make them my companions. They have

been endowed, I am thankful to say, with admirable qualities of head and heart, and I have striven unweariedly to nourish the good in them. It is not often that boys are brought into contact with sorrow so early as they. Their papa's death and my adverse circumstances have been real trials.'

'They must have been,' rejoined Mr. Ashley.

'While others of their age think only of play she continued, 'my boys have been obliged to learn the sad experiences of life; and it has given them a thought, a care, beyond their years. There is no necessity to *make* Frank and Edgar apply to their lessons unremittingly: they do it of themselves, with all their whole abilities, knowing that education is the only advantage they can possess—the one chance of their getting forward in the world. Had William been a boy of a different disposition, less tractable, less reflective, less conscientious, I might have found some difficulty in inducing him to work as he is doing.'

'Does he complain?' inquired Mr. Ashley.

'Oh, no, sir! He feels that it is his duty to work, to assist so far as he can, and he does it without complaining. I see that he cannot help feeling it; he would like to be in the college with his brothers. But I cheer him up, and tell him it may all turn out for the best. Perhaps it will.'

She rose as she spoke. Mr. Ashley shook hands with her, and attended her through the hall. 'Your sons deserve to get on, Mrs. Halli-

burton, and I hope they will do so. It is an admirable promise of the future man, when a boy displays self-thought and self-reliance.'

'Mamma!' suddenly exclaimed Janey, as they sat at breakfast the morning after this, 'do you remember what to-day is? It is my birthday.'

Jane had remembered it. She had been almost in hopes that the child would not remember it. One year ago, that day, the first glimpse of the shadow, so soon to fall upon them, had shown itself. What a change! The contrast between last year and this, were almost incredible. Then they had been in possession of a good home, were living in prosperity, in apparent security. Now—Jane's heart turned sick at the thought. Only one short year!

'Yes, Janey dear,' she replied in a sadly subdued tone. 'I did not forget it. I——'

A double knock at the street door interrupted what she would have further said. They heard Dobbs go to answer it: visitors were mostly for Mrs. Reece.

Who should be standing there but Samuel Lynn! He did not choose the familiar open back way, as Patience did, had he occasion to call, but knocked at the front.

'Is Jane Halliburton within?'

'You can go and see,' said crusty, disappointed Dobbs, flourishing her hand towards the study door. 'It's not often that she's out.'

Jane rose at his entrance; but he declined to sit, standing while he delivered the message with which he had been charged.

'Friend, thee need not send thy son to the manufactory again in an evening, except on Saturdays. On the other evenings he may remain at home from tea-time, and pursue his studies. His wages will not be lessened.'

And Jane knew that the considerate kindness emanated from Thomas Ashley.

She got on better with her work as the months went on. By summer she could do it quickly; the days were long then, and, by dint of sitting closely to it, she could earn twelve shillings per week. With William's earnings, and the six shillings taken from Mrs. Reece's payments, that made twenty-two. It was quite a fortune, compared to what had been. But, like most great fortunes, it had its taxes and its drawbacks. In the first place, she could not always earn it; she was compelled to steal unwilling time to mend her own and the children's clothes. In the second place, a good portion of it had to be devoted to buying their clothes, besides other incidental expenses; so that in the matter of housekeeping they did not thrive much better. Still, Jane did begin to think that she should see her way clearer. But there was sorrow of a different nature looming in the distance.

One afternoon, which Jane was obliged to

devote to plain sewing, she was sitting alone in the study, when there came a hard, short thump at it, which was Dobbs's way of making known her presence there.

'Come in!'

Dobbs came in, and sat herself down opposite Jane. It was summer weather, and the August dust blew in at the open window. 'I want to know what's the matter with Janey,' began she, without circumlocution.

'With Janey?' repeated Mrs. Halliburton. 'What should be the matter with her? I know of nothing.'

'Of course not,' sarcastically answered Dobbs. 'Eyes appear to be given to some folks only to blind 'em—more's the pity! You can't see it; my missis can't see it; but I say that the child is ill.'

'Oh, Dobbs! I think you must be mistaken.'

'Now, I'd thank you to be civil, if you please, Mrs. Halliburton,' retorted Dobbs. 'You don't take me for a common servant, I hope. Who's "Dobbs?"'

'I had no thought to be uncivil,' said Jane. 'I am so much accustomed to hear Mrs. Reece call you Dobbs, that——'

'My missis is one case, and other folks is another,' burst forth Dobbs, by way of interruption. 'I have got a handle to my name, I hope, which is Mrs. Dobbs, and I'd be obleeged to you not to forget it again. What's the reason that Janey's always

tired now, I ask?—don't want to stir—gets of a bright pink in the cheeks and inside the hands?'

'It is only the effect of the heat of the weather.'

The opinion did not please Dobbs. 'There's not a earthly thing happens, but it's laid to the weather,' she angrily cried. 'The weather, indeed! If Janey is not going off after her pa, it's a odd thing to me.'

Jane's heart-pulse stood still.

'Does she have night prespirations, or does she not?' demanded Dobbs. 'She tells me she's hot and damp; so I conclude it is so.'

'Only from the heat—only from the heat,' panted Jane, eagerly. She dared not admit the fear.

'Well, the first time I go down to the town, I shall take her to Parry. It won't be at your cost,' she hastened to add in an ungracious tone, for Jane was about to interrupt. 'If she wants to know what she's took to the doctor's for, I shall tell her it is to have her teeth looked at. She has got a nasty cough upon her: perhaps you haven't noticed that! Some can't see a child decaying under their very nose, while strangers can see it palpable.'

'She has coughed since last week, the day of the rain, when she went with Anna Lynn into the field at the back, and they got their feet wet. Oh, I am sure there is nothing serious the matter with her,' added Jane, resolutely endeavouring to

put the suggested fear from her. 'I want her in: she must help me with my sewing.'

'Then she's not a-going to help,' resolutely returned Dobbs. 'She has had a good dinner of roast lamb and sparrow-grass and kidney pertatoes, and she's a-sitting back in my easy chair, opposite to my missis in hers. Her wanting always to rest, might have told some folks that she was ailing. When children are in health, their legs and wings and tongue are on the go from morning till night. You never need pervide 'em with a seat, but for their meals; and, give 'em their way, they'd eat *them* standing. Jane's always wanting to rest now, and she shall rest.'

'But, indeed she must help me to-day,' urged Jane. 'She can sew straight seams, and hem. Look at this heap of mending! and it must be finished to-night. I cannot afford to be about it to-morrow.'

'What sewing is it you want done?' questioned Dobbs, lifting up the work with a jerk. 'I'll do it myself, sooner than the child shall be bothered.'

'Oh, no, thank you. I should not like to trouble you with it.'

'Now, I make the offer to do the work,' crossly responded Dobbs; 'and if I didn't mean to do it, I shouldn't make it. You'd do well to give it me, if you want it done. Janey shan't work this afternoon.'

Taking her at her word, and, indeed, glad to do

so, Jane showed Dobbs a job, and Dobbs swung off with it. Jane called after her that she had not taken a needle and cotton. Dobbs retorted that she had got needles and cotton of her own, she hoped, and needn't be beholden to anybody else for 'em.

Jane sat on, anxious, all the afternoon. Janey remained in Mrs. Reece's parlour, and revelled in an early tea and pikelets. Jane was disturbed from her thoughts by the boisterous entrance of Frank and Gar, more boisterous than usual. Frank was a most exciteable boy, and he had been told that evening by the head master of the college school, the Reverend Mr. Keating, that he might be one of the candidates for the vacant place in the choir. This was enough to set Frank off for a week. 'You know what a nice voice you say I have, mamma; what a good ear for music!' he reiterated. 'As good as, you tell us, Aunt Margaret's used to be. I shall be sure to gain the place, if you will let me try. We have to be at college for an hour morning and afternoon daily, but we can easily get that up if we are industrious. Some of the best Helstonleigh scholars, who have shone at Oxford and Cambridge, were choristers. And I should have about ten pounds a-year paid to me.'

Ten pounds a-year! Jane listened with a beating heart. It would more than keep him in clothes. She inquired more fully into particulars.

The result was that Frank had leave to try for the vacant choristership, and gained it. His voice was the best of those tried. He went home in a glow. 'Now, mamma, the sooner you set about a new surplice for me the better.'

'A new surplice, Frank!' Ah, it was not all profit.

'A chorister must have two surplices, mamma. King's scholars can do with one, having them washed between the Sundays; choristers can't. We must have them always in wear, you know, except in Lent, and on the day of King Charles the Martyr.'

Jane smiled; he talked so fast. 'What is it that you are running on about?'

'Goodness, mamma, don't you understand? All the six weeks of Lent, and on the 30th of January, the cathedral is hung with black, and the choristers have to wear black cloth surplices. They don't find the black ones: the college does that.'

Frank's success in gaining the place did not give universal pleasure to the college school. Since the day of the disturbance in the spring, in which William was mixed up, the two young Halliburtons had been at a discount with the desk at which Cyril Dare sat; and this desk pretty well ruled the school.

'It's coming to a fine pass!' exclaimed Cyril Dare, when the result of the trial was carried into the school. 'Here's the town-clerk's own son

passed over as nobody, and that snob of a Halliburton put in! Somebody ought to have told the dean what snobs they are.'

'What would the dean have cared?' grumbled another, whose young brother had been among the rejected ones. 'To get good voices in the choir is all he cares for in the matter.'

'I say, where do they live—that set?'

'In a house of Ashley's, in the London Road,' answered Cyril Dare. 'They couldn't pay the rent, and my father put a bum in.'

'Bosh, Dare!'

'It's true,' said Cyril Dare. 'My father manages Ashley's rents, you know. They'd have had every stick and stone sold, only Ashley —he is a regular soft over some things—took and gave them time. Oh, they are a horrid lot! They don't keep a servant!'

The blank astonishment that this last item of intelligence caused at the desk, can't be described. Again Cyril's word was disputed.

'They don't, I tell you,' he repeated. 'I taxed Halliburton senior with it one day, and he told me to my face that they could not afford one. He possesses brass enough to set up a foundry, does that fellow. The eldest one is at Ashley's manufactory, errand boy. Errand boy! And here's this one promoted to the choir, over gentlemen's heads! He ought to be pitched into, ought Halliburton senior.'

In the school, Frank was Halliburton senior; Gar, Halliburton junior. 'How is it that he says he was at King's College before he came here? I heard him tell Keating so,' asked a boy.

At this moment Mr. Keating's voice was heard. 'Silence!' Cyril Dare let a minute elapse, and then began again.

'Such a low thing, you know, not to keep servants! We couldn't do at all without five or six. I'll tell you what: the school may do as it likes, but our desk shall cut the two fellows here.'

And the desk did; and Frank and Gar had to put up with many mortifications. There was no help for it. Frank was brave as a young lion; but against some sorts of oppression there is no standing up. More than once was the boy in tears, telling his griefs to his mother. It fell more on Frank than it did on Gar.

Jane could only strive to console him, as she did William. 'Patience and forbearance, my darling Frank! You will outlive it in time.'

CHAPTER II.

SHADOWS IN HONEY FAIR.

August was hot in Honey Fair. The women sat at their open doors, or even outside them; the children tumbled in the gutters, to get what moisture they could; the refuse in the road did not smell any the sweeter for the month's heat.

Charlotte East sat in her kitchen one Tuesday afternoon, busy as usual. Her door was shut, but her window was open. Suddenly the latch was lifted, and Mrs. Cross came in: not with the boisterous, bold movements that were common to Honey Fair, but with creeping steps, that seemed afraid of their own echoes, and a scared face.

Mrs. Cross was in a bit of trouble. Her two daughters, Amelia and Mary Ann, to whom you have had the honour of an introduction, had purchased those lovely cross-barred sarcenets, green, and pink, and lilac, and worn them to the party at the Alhambra: which party went off satisfactorily, leaving nothing behind it but some headaches for the next day, and a trifle of embarrassment, on a pecuniary score, to Honey Fair in

general. What with the finery for the party, and other finery, and what with articles really useful, but which perhaps *might* have been done without, Honey Fair was pretty deep in with the Messrs. Bankes. In Mrs. Cross's family alone, herself and her daughters owed, conjointly, so much to these accommodating tradesmen, that it took eight shillings weekly to keep them quiet. You can readily understand how this impoverished the weekly housekeeping; and the falsehoods that had to be concocted, by way of keeping the husband, Jacob Cross, in the dark, were something alarming. This was the state of things in many of the homes of Honey Fair.

Mrs. Cross came in with timid steps and a scared face. 'Charlotte, lend me five shillings for the love of goodness!' cried she, speaking as if afraid of the sound of her own voice. 'I don't know another soul to ask but you. There ain't another that 'ud have it to lend, barring Dame Buffle, and she never lends.'

'You owe me twelve shillings already,' answered Charlotte, pausing for a moment in her sewing.

'I know that. I'll pay you off by degrees, if it's only a shilling a week. I am a'most druv mad. Bankes's folks was here yesterday, and me and the girls had got only four shillings to give 'em. I be getting in arrears frightful, and Bankes's is as cranky over it as can be. It's all

smooth and fair so long as you be buying of Bankes's and paying of 'em; but just get behind, and see what short answers and sour looks you'll get!'

'But Amelia and Mary Ann took in their work on Saturday and had their money?'

'My patience! I don't know what us should do if they hadn't! We have got to pay up everywhere. We be in debt at Buffle's, we be in debt to the baker, we be in debt for shoes, we be in debt on all sides. And there's Cross a-spending three shilling, good, of his wages at the public-house! It takes what me and the girls earns to pay a bit up, here and there, and stop things from coming to Cross's ears. Half the house is in the pawn-shop, and what'll become of us I don't know. I can't sleep nights, hardly, for thinking on't.'

Charlotte felt sure that, were it her case, she should not sleep at all.

'The worst is, I have got to keep the little 'uns away from school. Pay for 'em I can't. And a fine muck they get into, a-playing in the road all day. "What does these children do to theirselves at school, to get into this dirty mess?" asks Cross, when he comes in. "Oh, they plays a bit in the gutter, a-coming home," says I, "and that mucks 'em." "We plays a bit, father," cries they, when they hears me, a-winking at each other to think how we does their father.'

Charlotte shook her head. 'I should end it all.

'End it! I wish we could end it! Them girls is a-going to slave theirselves night and day this week and next. But it's not for my good: it's for their'n. They want to get their grand silks out o' pawn! Nothing but outside finery goes down with them, though they've not got a inside rag to their backs. They leaves care to me. Fools, to be sure, they was, to buy them silks! They have been in the pawn-shop ever since, and Bankes's a tearing 'em to pieces for the money!'

'I should end it by confessing to Jacob,' said Charlotte, when she could get in a word. 'He is not a bad husband——'

'And look at his passionate temper!' broke in Mrs. Cross. 'Let it get to his ears, as we have gone on tick to Bankes's and elsewhere, and he'd rave the house out of its winders.'

'He would be angry, at first, there's no doubt: but when he cooled down, he would see the necessity of something being done, and help in it. If you all set on, and put your shoulders to the wheel, you might get clear soon. Live upon the very least that will satisfy hunger—the plainest food—dry bread and potatoes. No beer, no meat, no finery, no luxuries; and with the rest of the week's money begin to pay up. You'd be clear in no time.'

Mrs. Cross stared in consternation. 'You be a Job's comforter, you be, Charlotte! Dry bread and taters! who could stomach that?'

'When poor people like us fall into trouble, it is the only way, that I know of, to get out of it. I'd rather mortify my appetite for a year, than I'd have my rest broke by care.'

'Your advice is good enough for talking, Charlotte, but it don't answer for acting. Cross must have his bit o' meat, and his beer, and his butter, and his cheese, and his tea, and his sugar—and so must the rest on us. But about this five shillings? —do lend it me, Charlotte! It is for the landlord: we be a'most in a fix with him.'

'For the landlord!' repeated Charlotte, involuntarily. 'You must keep *him* paid, or it would be the worst of all.'

'I know we must. He was took bad yesterday —more's the blessing!—and couldn't get round; but he's here to-day as burly as beef. We haven't paid him for this three weeks,' she added, dropping her voice to an ominous whisper; 'and I declare to you, Charlotte East, that the sight of him at our door is as good to me as a dose of physic. Just now, round he comes, a-lifting of the latch, and me a-turning sick the minute I sees him. "Ready, Mrs. Cross?" asks he, in his short, surly way, a-putting of his brown wig up. "I'm sorry I ain't, Mr. Abbott, sir," says I; "but I'll have some next week for certain." "That won't do for me," says he: "I must have it this. If you can't give me some money, I shall apply to your husband." The fright this put me into I'm not over-

got yet, Charlotte; for Cross, he don't know but what the rent's paid up regular. "I know what's a-going on," old Abbott begins again, "and I have knowed it for some time. You women in this Honey Fair, you pays your money to them Bankes's, which is the blight o' the place, and then you can't pay me." Only fancy his calling Bankes's a blight!'

'That's just what they are,' remarked Charlotte.

'For shame, Charlotte East! When one's way is a bit eased by being able to get a few things on trust, you must put in your word again it! Some of us wouldn't never get a new gownd to our backs, if it wasn't for Bankes's. Abbott's gone off to other houses, collecting; warning me as he'd call again in half-an-hour, and if some money warn't ready for him then, he'd go straight off to Jacob, to his shop o' work. If you can let me have one week for him, Charlotte—five shillings—I'll be ever grateful.'

Charlotte rose, unlocked a drawer, and gave five shillings to Mrs. Cross, thinking in her own mind that the kindest course would be for the landlord to go to Cross, as he threatened.

Mrs. Cross took the money. Her mind so far relieved, she could indulge in a little gossip; for Mr. Abbott's half-hour had not yet expired.

'I say, Charlotte, what d'ye think? I'm afraid Ben Tyrrett and our Mary Ann is a-going to take up together.'

'Indeed!' exclaimed Charlotte. 'That's new.'

'Not over new. They have been a-talking together on and off, but I never thought it was serious till last Sunday. I have set my face dead against it. He have got a nasty temper of his own; and he is nothing but a jobber, at fifteen shillings a week, and his profits of the egg-whites. Our Mary Ann might do better nor that.'

'I think she might,' assented Charlotte. 'And she is over young to think of marrying.'

'Young!' wrathfully repeated Mrs. Cross. 'I should think she is young! Girls are as soft as apes. The minute a chap says a word to 'em about marrying, they be all agog to do it, whether it's fit, or whether it's unfit. Our Mary Ann might look inches over Ben Tyrrett's head, if she had any sense in her. Hark ye, Charlotte! When you see her, just put in a word again it; maybe it'll turn her. Tell her you'd not have Tyrrett at a gift.'

'And that's true,' replied Charlotte, with a laugh, as her guest departed.

A few minutes, and Charlotte received another visitor. This was the wife of Mark Mason—a tall, bony woman, with rough black hair and a loud voice. That voice and Mark did not get on very well together. She put her hands back upon her hips, and used it now, standing before Charlotte in a threatening attitude.

'What do you do, a-keeping our Carry out at night?'

Charlotte looked up in surprise. She was thinking of something else, or her answer might have been more cautious, for she was one of those who never willingly make mischief.

'I do not keep Caroline out. She is here of an evening now and then—not often.'

Mrs. Mason laughed—a low derisive laugh of mockery. 'I knowed it was a falsehood when she told it me! There she goes out, night after night, night after night; so I set Mark on to her, for I couldn't keep her in, neither find out where she went to. Mark was in a passion—something had put him out, and Carry was frighted, for he had got hold of her arm savage. "I am at Charlotte East's of a night, Mark," she said. "I shall take no harm there."'

Charlotte did not lift her eyes from her work. Mrs. Mason stood defiantly.

'Now, then! where is it as she gets to?'

'Why do you apply to me?' returned Charlotte. 'I am not Caroline Mason's keeper.'

'If you bain't her keeper, you be her adviser,' retorted Mrs. Mason. 'And that's worse.'

'When I advise Caroline at all, I advise her for her good.'

'My eyes is opened now, if they was blind afore,' continued Mrs. Mason, apostrophising in no gentle terms the offending Caroline. 'Who give Carry that there shawl?—who give her that there fine gownd?—who give her that there gold brooch,

with a stone in it of a colour 'twixt red and yaller, and a naked Cupid in white a flying on it? "A nice brooch you've got there, miss," says I to her. "Yes," says she, "they call 'em cameons." "And where did you get it, pray?" says I. "And that's my business," answers she. Next there was a neck scarf, green and lavender, with yaller fringe at its two ends to imitate gold, as deep as my fore-finger. "You be running up a tidy score at Bankes's, my lady," says I. "I shan't come to you to pay for it, if I be," says she. "No," thinks I to myself, "but you be a living in our house, and you may bring Mark into trouble over it"—for he's a soft-hearted gander at times. So down I goes to Bankes's place last night. "Just turn to the debt book, young man," says I to the gentleman behind the counter—it were the one with the dark hair—"and tell me how much is owed by Caroline Mason." "Be you come to settle it?" asks he. "Maybe I be, and maybe I bain't," says I. "I want's my question answered, whether or no." Be you a listening to me, Charlotte East?'

Charlotte lifted her eyes from her work. 'Yes.'

'He lays hold of a big book,' continued Mrs. Mason, who was talking her face crimson, 'and draws his finger down its pages. "Caroline Mason—Caroline Mason," says he, "I don't think we have got anything against her. No: it's crossed off. There was a trifle again her, but she paid it

last week." Well, I stood a-staring at the man, thinking he was deceiving of me, saying she had *paid*. "When did she pay for that there shawl she had in the winter, and how much did it cost?" asks I. "Shawl!" says he. "Caroline Mason hasn't had no shawl of us." "Nor a gownd at Easter—a fancy sort of thing, with stripes?" I goes on; "nor a cameon brooch last week? nor a scarf with yaller fringe?" "Nothing o' the sort," says he, decisive. "Caroline Mason hasn't bought any of them articles from us. She had some bonnet ribbun, and that she paid for." Now, what was I to think?' concluded Mrs. Mason.

Charlotte did not know.

'I comes home a-pondering, and at the corner of the lane I catches sight of a certain gentleman a-loitering about in the shade. The truth flashed into my mind. "He's after our Caroline," I says to myself; "and it's him that has given her the things, and we shall just have her a world's spectacle!" I accused Eliza Tyrrett of being the confidant. "It isn't me," says she; "it's Charlotte East." So I bottled up my temper till now, and now I've come to learn the rights on't.'

'I cannot tell you the rights,' replied Charlotte. 'I do not know them. I have striven to give Caroline some good advice lately, and that is all I have had to do with it. Mrs. Mason, you know that I should never advise Caroline, or any one else, but for her good.'

Mrs. Mason would have acknowledged this in a cooler moment. 'Why did that Tyrrett girl laugh at me, then? and why did Carry say she spent her evenings here?' cried she. 'The gentleman I see was young Anthony Dare: and Carry had better bury herself alive, than be drawed aside by his nonsense.'

'Much better,' acquiesced Charlotte. 'Where is Caroline?'

'Under lock and key,' said Mrs. Mason.

'Under lock and key!' echoed Charlotte.

'Yes; under lock and key; and there she shall stop. She was out all this blessed morning with Eliza Tyrrett, and never walked herself in till after Mark had had his dinner and was gone. So then I began upon her. My temper was up, and I didn't spare her. I vowed I'd tell Mark what I had seen and heard, and what sort of a wolf she allowed to make her presents of fine clothes. With that she turned wild, and flung up to her bed-closet in the cock-loft, and I followed and locked her in.'

'You have done very wrong,' said Charlotte. 'It is not by harshness that any good will be done with Caroline. You know her disposition: a child might lead her by kindness, but she rises up to harshness. My opinion is, that she never would have given the least trouble at all, had you made her a better home.'

This bold avowal took away Mrs. Mason's breath.

'A better home!' cried she, when she could speak. 'A better home! Fed her upon French rolls and lobster salad and apricot tarts, and give her a lady's maid to hook and eye her gownds for her behind! My heart! that cobs all.'

'I don't speak of food, and that sort of thing,' rejoined Charlotte. 'If you had treated her with kind words, instead of cross ones, she'd have been as good a girl as ever lived. Instead of that, you have made your home unbearable, and so drove her out, with her dangerous good looks, to be told of them by the first idler that came across her: and that seems to have been Anthony Dare. Go home, and let her out of where you have locked her; do, Hetta Mason! Let her out, and speak kindly to her, and treat her as a sister; and you'll undo all the bad yet.'

'I shan't, then!' was the passionate reply. 'I'll see you and her hung first, afore I speak kind to her, to encourage her in her loose ways!'

Mrs. Mason flung out of the house as she concluded, giving the door a bang, which only had the effect of sending it open again. Charlotte sighed, as she rose to shut it: not only for any peril that Caroline Mason might be in, but for the general blindness, the distorted views of right and wrong, which seemed to obtain amidst the women of Honey Fair.

CHAPTER III.

THE DARES AT HOME.

A PROFUSION of glass and plate glittered on the dining-table of Mr. Dare. It was six o'clock, and they had just sat down. Mrs. Dare, in a light gauze dress and blonde head-dress, sat at the table's head. There was a large family; four sons and four daughters, and all were at table; also Miss Benyon, the governess. Anthony and Herbert sat on either side of Mrs. Dare; Adelaide and Julia, the eldest daughters, near their father; the four other children, Cyril and George, Rosa and Minny, were between them.

Mr. Dare was serving the salmon. In due course, a plate of it, followed by the sauce, was carried to Anthony.

'What's this? Melted butter! Where's the lobster sauce?'

'There is no lobster sauce to-day,' said Mrs. Dare. 'We sent late, and the lobsters were gone. There was a scarce supply. Joseph, take the anchovy to Mr. Anthony.'

Mr. Anthony jerked the anchovy sauce off the waiter, dashed some into the butter on his plate, and jerked the bottle back again. Not with a very good grace: his palate was a dainty one. Indeed, it was a family complaint.

'I'd not give a fig for salmon unless there's lobster sauce with it,' he cried. 'I hope you'll not send late again.'

'It was the cook's fault,' said Mrs. Dare. 'She did not fully understand my orders.'

'Deaf old creature,' exclaimed Anthony.

'Anthony, here's some cucumber,' said Julia, looking down the table at her brother. 'Ann, take the cucumber to Mr. Anthony.'

'You know I never eat cucumber with salmon,' grumbled Anthony, in reply. And it was not graciously spoken, for the offer had been dictated by good-nature.

A pause ensued. They were busy over their plates. It was at length broken by Mrs. Dare.

'Herbert, are you getting more reconciled to office-work.'

'No; and never shall be,' returned Herbert. 'From ten till five is an awful clog upon one's time: it's as bad as school.'

Mr. Dare looked up from his salmon. 'You might have been put to a profession that would occupy a vast deal more time, Herbert. What calls have you upon your time, pray, that it is so valuable? Will you take some more fish?'

'Well, I don't know. I think I will. It is good to-day; very good with the cucumber, that Anthony runs down.'

Ann whipped up his plate and took it round to Mr. Dare.

'Anthony,' said that gentleman as he filled it, 'where were you this afternoon? You were away from the office entirely, after two o'clock.'

'Out with Hawkesley,' shortly replied Anthony.

'Yes; it is all very well to say, "Out with Hawkesley," but the office suffers. I wish you young men were not quite so fond of taking your pleasure.'

'More fish, sir?' asked Joseph of Anthony.

'Not if I know it.'

The second course came in. A quarter of lamb, asparagus, and other vegetables. Herbert looked cross. He had recently taken a dislike to lamb, or fancied that he had. 'Of course there's something coming for me!' he said.

'Oh, of course,' said Mrs. Dare. 'Cook knows you don't like lamb.'

Nothing, however, came in. Ann was sent to inquire the cause of the neglect. The cook had been unable to get a veal cutlet, and Master Herbert had said if she ever got him a mutton-chop again, he should throw it at her head. Such was the message brought back.

'What an old story-teller she must be, to say she could not get veal cutlet!' exclaimed Herbert.

'I hate mutton and lamb, and I am not going to eat either one or the other.'

'I heard the butcher say this morning that he had no veal, Master Herbert,' interposed Ann. 'This hot weather they don't kill much meat.'

'Why have you taken this dislike to lamb, Herbert?' asked Mr. Dare. 'You have eaten it all the season.'

'That's just it,' answered Herbert. 'I have eaten so much of it that I am sick of it.'

'Never mind, Herbert,' said his mother. 'There's a cherry tart coming, and a delicious lemon pudding. I don't think you can be so very hungry: you had two good servings of salmon.'

Herbert was not in a good humour. All the Dares had been blamably pampered, and of course it bore its fruits. He sat drumming with his silver fork upon the table, condescending to try a little asparagus, and a great deal of both the pie and pudding. Cheese, salad, and dessert followed, all of which Herbert partook of plentifully. Still he thought he was terribly used, in not having different meat specially provided for him! and he could not recover his good humour. I tell you the Dares had been most perniciously indulged. The house was one of luxury and profusion, and every little whim and fancy had been studied. It is one of the worst schools a child can be reared in.

The three younger daughters and the governess

withdrew, after drinking each a glass of wine. Cyril and George went off likewise, to their lessons or to play. It was their own affair, and Mr. Dare made it no concern of his. Presently Mrs. Dare and Adelaide rose.

'Hawkesley's coming in this evening,' called out Anthony, as they were going through the door.

Adelaide turned. 'What did you say, Anthony?'

'Lord Hawkesley's coming. At least, he said so: that he would look in for an hour. But there's no dependence to be placed on him.'

'We must be in the large drawing-room, mamma, this evening,' said Adelaide, as they crossed the hall. 'Miss Benyon and the children can take tea in the school-room.'

'Yes,' assented Mrs. Dare. 'It is bad style to have one's drawing-room encumbered with children, and Lord Hawkesley understands all that. Let them be in the school-room.'

'Julia also?'

Mrs. Dare shrugged her shoulders. 'If you can persuade her into it. I don't think Julia will consent to take her tea in the school-room. Why should she?'

Adelaide vouchsafed no reply. Dutiful children they were not—affectionate children they were not—they had not been reared to be so. Mrs. Dare was of the world, worldly: very much so: and that leaves but a scant portion of time upon the hands. She had taken no pains to train her

children; she had given them very little love. This little conversation had taken place in the hall. Mrs. Dare went up stairs to the large drawing-room, a really handsome room. She rang the bell, and gave sundry orders, the moving motive to all of which was the doubtful visit of Viscount Hawkesley—ices from the pastrycook's, a tray of refreshments, the best china, the best silver. Then Mrs. Dare lay back in her chair for her after-dinner nap—an indulgence she much favoured.

Adelaide Dare entered the smaller drawing-room, an apartment more commonly used, and opening from the hall. Julia was reading a book just brought in from the library. Miss Benyon was softly playing, and the two little ones were quarrelling. Miss Benyon turned round from the piano when Adelaide entered.

'You must make tea in the school-room this evening, Miss Benyon, for the children. Julia, you are to take yours there.'

Julia looked off her book. 'Who says so?'

'Mamma. Lord Hawkesley's coming, and we cannot have the drawing-room encumbered.'

'I am not going to keep out of the drawing-room for Lord Hawkesley,' returned Julia, a quiet girl in appearance and manner. 'Who is Lord Hawkesley, that he should disarrange the economy of the house? There's so much ceremony and parade observed when he comes, that it upsets

comfort. Your lordship this, and your lordship that; and papa my-lording him to the skies. I don't like it. He looks down upon us—I know he does—although he condescends to make a sort of friend of Anthony.'

Adelaide Dare's dark eyes flashed, and her cheeks turned crimson. She was a handsome girl. 'Julia! I do think you are an idiot!'

'Perhaps I am,' composedly returned Julia, who was of a careless easy temper; 'but I am not going to be kept out of the drawing-room for my Lord Hawkesley. Let me go on with my book in peace, Adelaide: it is a charming one.'

Meanwhile, Herbert Dare, seeing the prospect of no more wine in store—for Mr. Dare, with wonderful prudence, told Herbert that two glasses of port were sufficient for him—left his seat, and bolted out at the drawing-room window, which opened on the ground. He ran into the hall for his hat, and then, speeding across the lawn, went into the high road. Anthony remained alone with his father; and Anthony was plucking up courage to speak upon a subject that was causing him some perplexity. He plunged into it at once.

'Father, I am in a mess. I have managed to outrun the constable.'

Mr. Dare was at that moment holding his glass of wine between his eye and the light. The words quite scared him. He set his glass down, and looked at Anthony.

'How's that? How have you managed that?'

'I don't know how it has come about,' was Anthony's answer. 'It is so, sir; and you must be so good as to help me out of it.'

'Your allowance is sufficient—amply so. Do you forget that I set you clear of debt at the beginning of the year? What money do you want?'

Anthony Dare began pulling the fringe out of his dessert napkin, to the great detriment of its damask middle. 'Two hundred pounds, sir.'

'Two hundred pounds!' echoed Mr. Dare, a dark expression shading his handsome face. 'Do you want to ruin me, Anthony? Look at my expenses! look at the claims upon me! I say that your allowance is liberal, and you ought to keep within it.'

Anthony sat biting his lip. 'I would not have applied to you, sir, if I could have helped it; but I am driven into a corner, and *must* find money. I and Hawkesley drew some bills together. He has taken up two, and I——'

'Then you and Hawkesley were a couple of fools for your pains,' intemperately interrupted Mr. Dare. 'There's no game so dangerous, so delusive, as that of drawing bills. Have I not told you so, over and over again? Simple debt may be staved off from month to month, and from year to year; but bills are nasty things. When I was

a young man I lived for years upon promises to pay, but I took care not to put my name to a bill.'

'Hawkesley——'

'Hawkesley may do what you must not,' interrupted Mr. Dare, drowning his son's voice. 'He has got his father's long rent-roll to turn to. Recollect, Anthony, this must not occur again. It is impossible that I can be called upon periodically for these sums. Herbert is almost a man, and Cyril and George are growing up. A pretty thing, if you were all to come upon me in this manner. I have to exert my wits, as it is, I can tell you. I'll give you a cheque to-morrow; and I should serve you right if I were to put you upon half allowance until I am repaid.'

Mr. Dare finished his wine, rang for the servant to clear the table, and left the room. Anthony remained standing against the side of the window, half in, half out, buried in a brown study, when Herbert came up, leaping over the grass. Herbert was nearly as tall as Anthony. He had been for some time articled to his father, but had only joined the office the previous Midsummer. He looked into the room, and saw it was empty.

'Where's the governor?'

'Gone somewhere. Into the drawing-room, perhaps,' replied Anthony.

'What a nuisance!' ejaculated Herbert. 'One can't talk to him before the girls. I want twenty-

five shillings from him. Markham has got the primest fishing-rod to sell, and I must have it.'

'Twenty-five shillings for a fishing-rod!' cried Anthony.

'And cheap at the price,' answered Herbert. 'You don't often see so complete a thing as this. Markham would not part with it, it's a relic of his better days, he says, only his old mother wants some comfort or other got for her, which he can't afford. The case——'

'You have half a dozen fishing-rods already.'

'Half a dozen rubbish! That's what they are, compared to this one. It's no business of yours, Anthony.'

'Not at all. But you'll oblige me, Herbert, by not bothering the governor for money to-night. I have been asking him for some, and it has put him out.'

'Did you get it?'

Anthony nodded.

'Then you'll let me have the one-pound-five, Anthony?'

'I can't,' returned Anthony. 'I shall have a cheque to-morrow, and I must pay it away whole. *That* won't clear me. But I didn't dare to tell of more.'

'If I don't get that fishing-rod to-night, Markham may sell it to somebody else,' grumbled Herbert.

'Go and get it,' replied Anthony. 'Promise

him the money for to-morrow. You are not obliged to give it, you know. The governor has just said that he lived for years upon promises to pay.'

'Markham wants the money down.'

'He'll think that as good as down if you tell him he shall have it to-morrow. Bring the fishing-rod away; possession's nine points of the law, you know.'

'He'll make such an awful row afterwards, if he finds he does not get the money.'

'Let him. You can row again. It's the easiest thing on earth to stave off little paltry debts like that. People get tired of asking for them.'

Away vaulted Herbert to get the fishing-rod. Anthony yawned, stretched himself, and walked out just as the twilight was fading. He was going out to keep an appointment.

Herbert Dare went back to Markham's. The man —though, indeed, so far as descent went he might be called a gentleman—lived a little way beyond Mr. Dare's. The cottage was situated in the midst of a large garden, in which Markham worked late and early. He had a very, very small patrimony, upon which he lived, and kept his mother. He was bending over one of the beds when Herbert returned. 'He would take the fishing-rod then, and bring the money over at nine in the morning, before going to the office. Mr. Dare was gone out, or he would have brought it at once,' was the

substance of the words in which Herbert concluded the negotiation.

Could they have looked behind the hedge at that moment, Herbert Dare and Markham, they would have seen two young gentlemen suddenly duck down under its shade, creep silently along, heedless of the ditch, which, however, was tolerably dry at that season, make a sudden bolt across the road, when they got opposite the entrance of Mr. Dare's, and whisk inside its gates. They were Cyril and George. That they had been at some mischief, and were striving to escape detection, was unmistakable. Under cover of the garden wall, as they had previously done under cover of the road hedge, crept they; sprung into the house by the dining-room window, tore up the stairs, and took refuge in the drawing-room, startlingly arousing Mrs. Dare from her after-dinner slumbers.

In point of fact, they had reckoned upon finding the room unoccupied.

CHAPTER IV.

THROWING AT THE BATS.

AROUSED thus abruptly out of her sleep, cross and startled, Mrs. Dare attacked the two boys with angry words. "I will know what you have been doing," she exclaimed, rising and shaking out the flounces of her dress. "You have been at some mischief! Why do you come violently in, in this manner, looking as frightened as hares?'

'Not frightened,' replied Cyril. 'We are only hot. We had a run for it.'

'A run for what?' she repeated. 'When I say I will know a thing, I mean to know it. I ask you what you have been doing?'

'It's nothing very dreadful, that you need put yourself out,' replied George. 'One of old Markham's windows has come to grief.'

'Then that's through throwing stones again!' exclaimed Mrs. Dare. 'Now, I am certain of it, and you need not attempt to deny it. You shall pay for it out of your own pocket-money; if he comes here, as he did the last time.'

'Ah, but he won't come here,' returned Cyril. 'He didn't see us. Is tea not ready?'

'You can go in the school-room and see. You are to take it there this evening.'

The boys tore away to the school-room. Unlike Julia, they did not care where they took it, provided they got it. Miss Benyon was pouring out the tea as they entered. They threw themselves on a sofa, and burst into a fit of laughter so immoderate and long, that their two young sisters crowded round eagerly, asking to hear the joke.

'It was the primest fun!' cried Cyril when he could speak. 'We have just smashed one of Markham's windows. The old woman was at it in a nightcap, and I think the stone must have touched her head. Markham and Herbert were holding a confab together, and they never saw us!'

'We were chucking at the leathering-bats,' put in George, jealous that his brother should have all the telling to himself, 'and the stone——'

'It is leather-winged bat, Master George,' interrupted the governess. 'I corrected you the other night.'

'What does it matter?' roughly answered George. 'I wish you'd not put me out. A leathering-bat dipped down nearly right upon our heads, and we both heaved at him, and one of the stones went through the window, nearly taking,

as Cyril says, old Mother Markham's head. Won't they be in a temper at having to pay for it! They are as poor as charity.'

'They'll make you pay,' said Rosa.

'Will they?' retorted Cyril. 'No catch, no have! I'll give them leave to make us pay when they find us out. Do you suppose we are donkeys, you girls? We dipped down under the hedge, and not a soul saw us. What's for tea?'

'Bread and butter,' replied the governess.

'Then those may eat it that like! I shall have some jam.'

Cyril rang the bell as he spoke. Nancy, the maid who waited on the school-room, came in answer to it. 'Some jam,' said Cyril. 'And be quick over it.'

'What sort, sir?' inquired Nancy.

'Sort? oh—let's see: damson.'

'The damson jam was finished last week, sir. It is nearly the season to make more.'

Cyril replied by a rude and ugly word. After some cogitation, he decided upon black currant.

'And bring me up some apricot,' put in George.

'And we'll have some gooseberry,' called out Rosa. 'If you boys have jam, we'll have some.'

Nancy disappeared. Cyril suddenly threw himself back on the sofa, and burst into another ringing laugh. 'I can't help it!' he exclaimed. 'I am thinking of the old woman's fright, and their dismay at having to pay the damage.'

'Do you know what I should do in your place, Master Cyril?' said Miss Benyon. 'I should go back to Markham, and tell him honourably that I caused the accident. You know how poor they are: they cannot afford to pay for it.'

Cyril stared at Miss Benyon. 'Where'd be the pull of that?' asked he.

'The "pull," Cyril, would be, that you would repair a wrong done to an unoffending neighbour, and might go to sleep with a clear conscience.'

The last suggestion amused Cyril amazingly; he and conscience had not a great deal to do with each other. He was politely telling Miss Benyon that those notions were good enough for old maids, when Nancy appeared with the several sorts of jam demanded. Cyril drew his chair to the table, and Nancy went down.

'Ring the bell, Rosa,' said Cyril, before the girl could well have got to the kitchen. 'I can't see one sort from another; we must have candles.'

'Ring it yourself,' retorted Rosa.

'George, ring the bell,' commanded Cyril.

George obeyed. He was under Cyril in the college school, and accustomed to obey him. 'You might have told Nancy when she was here,' remarked Miss Benyon to Cyril. 'It would have saved her a journey.'

'And if it would!' asked Cyril. 'What were servants' legs made for, but to be used?'

Nancy received the order for the candles, and

brought them up. It was to be hoped her legs *were* made to be used, for scarcely had Cyril begun to enjoy his black currant jam, when they were heard coming up the stairs again.'

'Master Cyril, Mr. Markham wants to see you.'

Cyril and the rest exchanged looks. 'Did you say I was at home?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then you were an idiot for your pains! I can't come down, tell him. I am at tea.'

Down went Nancy accordingly. And back she came again. 'He says he must see you, Master Cyril.'

'Be a man, Cyril, and face it,' whispered Miss Benyon in his ear.

Cyril jerked his head rudely away from her. 'I won't go down. There! Nancy, you may tell Markham so.'

'He has sat down on the garden bench, sir, outside the window, to wait,' explained Nancy. 'He says, if you won't see him, he shall ask for Mr. Dare.'

Cyril appeared to be in for it. He dashed his bread and jam on the table, and clattered down. 'Who's wanting me?' called out he, when he got outside. 'Oh!—is it you, Markham?'

'How came you to throw a stone just now, and break my window, Master Dare?'

The words threw Cyril into the greatest appa-

rent surprise. 'I throw a stone and break your window!' repeated he. 'I don't know what you mean.'

'Either you or your brother threw it; you were both together. It entered my mother's bed-room window, and went within an inch of her head. I'll trouble you to send a glazier round to put the pane in.'

'Well, of all strange accusations, this is about the strangest!' uttered Cyril. 'We have not been near your window; we are up-stairs at our tea.'

At this juncture, Mr. Dare came out. He had heard the altercation in the house. 'What's this?' asked he. 'Good evening, Markham.'

Markham explained. 'They crouched down under the hedge when they had done the mischief,' he continued, 'thinking, no doubt, to get away undetected. But, as it happened, Brooks, the nurseryman, was in his ground behind the opposite hedge, and he saw the whole. He says they were throwing at the bats. Now I should be sorry to get them punished, Mr. Dare: we have been boys ourselves; but if young gentlemen will throw stones, they must pay for any damage they do. I have requested your son to send a glazier round in the morning. I am sorry he should have denied the fact.'

Mr. Dare turned to Cyril. 'If you did it, why do you deny it?'

Cyril hesitated for the tenth part of a second.

Which would be the best policy? To give in, or to hold out? He chose the latter. His word was as good as that confounded Brooks's, and he'd brave it out! 'We didn't do it,' he angrily said; 'we have not been near the place this evening. Brooks must have mistaken others for us in the dusk.'

'They did do it, Mr. Dare. There's no mistake about it. Brooks had been watching them, and he thinks it was the bigger one who threw that particular stone. If I had set a house on fire,' Markham added, to Cyril, 'I'd rather confess the accident, than deny it by a lie. What sort of a man do you expect to make?'

'A better one than you!' insolently retorted Cyril.

'Wait an instant,' said Mr. Dare. He proceeded to the school-room to inquire of George. That young gentleman had been an admiring hearer of the colloquy from a staircase window. He tore back to the school-room on the approach of his father; hastily deciding that he must bear out Cyril in the denial. 'Now, George,' said Mr. Dare, sternly, 'did you and Cyril do this, or did you not?'

'Of course we did not, papa,' was the ready reply. 'We have not been near Markham's. Brooks must be a fool.'

Mr. Dare believed. He was leaving the room when Miss Benyon interposed.

'Sir, I should be doing wrong to allow you to be deceived. They did break the window.'

The address caused Mr. Dare to pause. 'How do you know it, Miss Benyon?'

Miss Benyon related what had passed. Mr. Dare cast his eyes sternly upon his youngest son. 'It is you who are the fool, George, not Brooks. A lie is sure to get found out in the end; don't attempt to tell another.'

Mr. Dare went down. 'I cannot come quite to the bottom of this business, Markham,' said he, feeling unwilling to expose his sons more than they had exposed themselves. 'At all events, you shall have the window put in. A pane of glass is not much on either side.'

'It is a good deal to my pocket, Mr. Dare. But that's all I ask. And you know my character too well, to fear I would make a doubtful claim. Brooks is open to inquiry.'

He departed; and Mr. Dare touched Cyril on the arm. 'Come with me.'

He took him into the room, and there ensued an angry lecture. Cyril thought George had confessed, and stood silent before his father. 'What a sneak he must have been!' thought Cyril. 'Won't I serve him out!'

'If you have acquired the habit of speaking falsely, you had better relinquish it,' resumed Mr. Dare. 'It will not be a recommendation in the eyes of Mr. Ashley.'

'I am not going to Ashley's,' burst forth Cyril; for the mention of the subject was sure to anger him. 'Turn manufacturer, indeed! I'd rather——'

'You'd rather be a gentleman at large,' interrupted Mr. Dare. 'But,' he sarcastically added, 'gentlemen require something to live upon. Listen, Cyril. One of the finest openings that I know of in this city, for a young man, is in Ashley's manufactory. *You* may despise Mr. Ashley for a manufacturer; but others respect him. He was reared a gentleman—he is regarded as one; he is wealthy, and his business is large and flourishing. Suppose you could drop into this, after him?—succeed to this fine business, its sole proprietor? I can tell you that you would occupy a better position, and be in receipt of a far larger income, than either Anthony or Herbert will.'

'But there's no such chance, as that, for me,' debated Cyril.

'There is the chance: and that's why you are to be placed there. Henry, from his infirmity, is not to be brought up to business, and there is no other son. You will be apprenticed to Mr. Ashley, with a view of succeeding, as a son would, first of all to a partnership with him, eventually to the whole. Now this is the prospect before you, Cyril; and, prejudiced though you are, you must see that it is a fine one.'

'Well,' acknowledged Cyril, 'I'd not object to

drop into a good thing like that. Has Mr. Ashley proposed it?'

'No, he has not distinctly proposed it. But he did admit, when your apprenticeship was being spoken of, that he might be wanting somebody to succeed him. He more than hinted that whoever might be chosen to succeed him, or to be associated with him, must be rendered fit for the connection by being an estimable and a good man; one held in honour by his fellow citizens. No other could be linked with the name of Ashley. And now, sir, what do you think he, Mr. Ashley, would say to your behaviour to-night?'

Cyril looked rather shamefaced.

'You will go to Mr. Ashley's, Cyril. But I wish you to remember, to remember always, that the contingent advantages will depend upon yourself and your conduct. Become a good man, and there's little doubt they will be yours; turn out indifferently, and there's not the slightest chance for you.'

'I shan't succeed to any of Ashley's money, I suppose?' complacently questioned Cyril, who somewhat ignored the conditions, and saw himself in prospective Mr. Ashley's successor.

'It is impossible to say what you may succeed to,' replied Mr. Dare, in so significant a tone as to surprise Cyril. 'Henry Ashley's I should imagine to be a doubtful life; should anything

happen to him, Mary Ashley will, of course, inherit all. And he will be a fortunate man who shall get into her good graces and marry her.

It was a broad hint to a boy like Cyril. 'She's such a proud thing, that Mary Ashley!' grumbled he.

'She is a very sweet child,' was the warm rejoinder of Mr. Dare. And Cyril went up-stairs again to his jam, and his interrupted tea.

Meanwhile the evening went on, and the drawing-room was waiting for the Viscount Hawkesley. Mrs. Dare and Adelaide were waiting for him—waiting anxiously in elegant attire. Mr. Dare did not seem to care whether he came or not; and Julia, who was buried in an easy chair with her book, would have preferred, of the two, that he stayed away. Between eight and nine he came. He was a little man; young, fair, with light eyes and sharp features, a somewhat cynical expression habitually on his lips. Helstonleigh, in its gossip, conjectured that he must be making young Anthony Dare useful to him in some way or other, or he would not have condescended to the intimacy. For Lord Hawkesley, a proud man by nature, had been reared in all the prejudiced exclusiveness of an earl's son and heir; and that exclusiveness was greater in those days than it is in these. This was the third evening visit he had paid to Mrs. Dare. Had the good looks of Adelaide any attraction? *She* was beginning to think

so, and to weave visions upon the strength of it. Entrenched, as the Dares were, in their folly and their assumption, Adelaide was blind to the wide social gulf that lay between herself and Viscount Hawkesley.

She sat down at the piano at his request, and sang—an Italian song. She had a good voice, and her singing was better than her Italian accent. Lord Hawkesley stood by her and looked over the music.

'I like your style of singing very much,' he remarked to her at the song's close. 'You must have learnt of a good master.'

'*Comme ça*,' carelessly rejoined Adelaide. Like many more young ladies who possess a very superficial knowledge of French, she deemed it the perfection of good taste to display as much as she did know. 'I had the best professor that Helstonleigh can boast; but what are Helstonleigh professors compared to those obtainable in London? We cannot expect first-rate talent here.'

'Do you like London?' asked Lord Hawkesley.

'I was never there,' replied Adelaide, feeling the confession, when made to Lord Hawkesley, to be nothing but humiliation.

'Indeed! You would enjoy a London season.'

'Oh, so much! I know nothing of the London season, except from books. A contrast to your lordship, you will say,' she added, with a laugh. 'You must be almost tired of it, *désillusionné*.'

'What's that in English?' inquired Lord Hawkesley, whose French studies, so far as they had extended, had been utterly thrown away upon him. Labouring under the deficiency, he had to make the best of it, and he did it with a boast. 'Used up, I suppose you mean?'

Adelaide coloured excessively. She wondered if he was laughing at her; and made a mental vow never to speak French to a lord again.

'Will you deem me exacting, Miss Dare, if I trespass upon you for another song?'

Adelaide did not deem him exacting in the least. She was ready to sing as long as he pleased.

CHAPTER V.

CHARLOTTE EAST'S PRESENT.

Towards dusk, that same evening, Charlotte East went over to Mrs. Buffle's for some butter. After she was served, Mrs. Buffle—who was a little shrimp of a woman, with a red nose—crossed her arms upon the counter, and bent her face towards Charlotte's. 'Have you heered the news?' asked she. 'Mary Ann Cross is a-going to make a match of it with Ben Tyrrett.

'Is she?' said Charlotte. 'They had better wait a few years, both of them, until they shall have put by something.'

'They be neither of them of the putting-by sort,' returned Mrs. Buffle. 'Them Cross's is the worst girls to spend in all the Fair: unless it's Carry Mason. She don't spare her back, she don't. The wonder is, how she gets it.'

'Young girls will dress,' observed Charlotte, carelessly.

Mrs. Buffle laughed. 'You speak as if you were an old one.'

'I feel like one sometimes, Mrs. Buffle. When

children are left, as I and Robert were, with a baby brother to bring up, and hardly any means to do it, it helps them to steadiness. Tom——'

Eliza Tyrrett burst in at the door, with a jerk that made its inside bell twang and tinkle. 'Half-a-pound o' dips, long-tens, Dame Buffle, and be quick about it,' was her order. 'There's such a flare-up, in at Mason's.'

'A flare-up!' repeated Mrs. Buffle, who was always ripe and ready for a dish of scandal, whether it touched on domestic differences, or on young girls' improvidence in the shape of dress. 'Is Mason and her having a noise?'

'It's not him and her. It's about Carry. Hetty Mason locked Carry up this afternoon, and Mason he never came home at all to tea; he went and had some beer instead, and a turn at skittles, and she wouldn't let Carry out. He came in just now, and his wife told him a whole heap about Carry, and Mason went up to the cock-loft and undid the door, and threatened to kick Carry down. They be having it out in the kitchen, all the three.'

'What has Carry done?' asked eager Mrs. Buffle.

'Perhaps Charlotte East can tell,' said Eliza Tyrrett, slyly. 'She has been thick with Carry lately. *I* am not a-going to spoil sport.'

Charlotte took up her butter, and bending a severe look of caution on the Tyrrett girl, left the shop. Anthony Dare's reputation was not one of

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lustre, and the bare fact of Caroline Mason's allowing herself to walk with him would have damaged her in the eyes of Honey Fair. As well keep it, if possible, from Mrs. Buffle and other gossips.

As Charlotte crossed to her own door, she became conscious that some one was flying towards her in the dusk of the evening: a woman, with a fleet foot and panting breath. Charlotte caught hold of her. 'Caroline, where are you going?'

'Let me alone, Charlotte East'—and Caroline's nostrils were working, her eyes flashing. 'I have left their house for ever, and I am going to one who will give me a better.'

Charlotte held her tight. 'You must not go, Caroline.'

'I will,' she defiantly answered. 'I have chose my lot this night for better and for worse. Will I stay to be taunted without a cause? To be told I am what I am not? No! If anything should happen to me, let 'em reproach themselves, for they have drove me on to it.'

Charlotte put her plate of butter down in the dusty road. It impeded her hands, and she wanted all their strength for the wild girl. 'Caroline,' she urged, 'this is the turning point in your life. A step forward and you may have passed it beyond recall; a step backwards, and you may be saved for ever. Come home with me.'

Caroline in her madness—it was little else—

turned her ghastly face upon Charlotte. 'You shan't stop me, Charlotte East! You go your way, and I'll go mine. Shall Mark and she go on at me without a cause, calling me false names?'

'Come home with me, Caroline. You shall stop with me to-night; you shan't go back to Hetta. My bed's not large, but it will hold us.'

'I won't, I won't!' she uttered, struggling to be free.

'Only for a minute,' implored Charlotte. 'Come in for a minute until you are calm. You are mad just now.'

'I am drove to it. There!'

With a jerk she wrenched herself from Charlotte's grasp, passion giving her fierce strength: and she flew onwards and was lost in the dusky night. Charlotte East picked up her butter, and ran home. Her brothers were there. 'Tom,' said she, 'put this in the cupboard for me;' and out she went again. At the end of Honey Fair, a road lay each way. Which should she take? Which had Caroline taken?

She chose the one to the right—it was the most retired, and went groping about it for twenty minutes. As it happened, as such things do generally happen, Caroline had taken the other.

In a sheltered part of that, which lay back, away from the glare of gas-lamps, Caroline had taken refuge. She had expected somebody would be there to meet her; but she found herself

mistaken. Down she sat on a stone, and her wild passion began to cool.

Nearly half an hour afterwards, Charlotte found her there. Caroline was talking to Anthony Dare, who had just come up. Charlotte grasped hold of Caroline.

'You must come with me, Caroline.'

'Who on earth are you, and what do you want intruding here?' demanded Anthony Dare, turning round with a fierce stare on Charlotte.

'I am Charlotte East, sir, if it is any matter to you to know my name, and I am a friend of Caroline Mason's. I am come here to take her out of harm's way.'

'There's nothing to harm her here,' haughtily answered young Anthony. 'Mind your own business.'

'I am afraid there is one thing to harm her, sir, and that's you,' said brave Charlotte. 'You can't come among us people at Honey Fair for any good. Folks bent on good errands don't need to wait till dark, before they pay their visits. You had better give up prowling about this place, Mr. Anthony Dare. Stay with your own equals, sir; with them that 'll be a match for you.'

'The woman must be deranged!' uttered Anthony, going into a terrible passion. 'How dare you presume to say such things to me?'

'How dare you, sir, set yourself out to work ill?' retorted Charlotte. 'Come along, Caroline,'

she added to the girl, who was now crying bitterly. 'As for you, sir, if you mean no harm, as you say, and it is necessary that you should condescend to visit Honey Fair, please to pay your visits in the bright light of day.'

No very pleasant word broke from Anthony Dare. He would have liked to exterminate Charlotte. 'Caroline,' foamed he, 'order this woman away. If I could see a policeman, I'd give her in charge.'

'Sir, if you dare attempt to detain her, I'll appeal to the first passer-by. I'll tell them to look at the great and grand Mr. Anthony Dare, and to ask him what he wants here, night after night.'

Even as Charlotte spoke, footsteps were heard, and two gentlemen, talking together, advanced. The voice of one fell familiarly on the ear of Anthony Dare, familiarly on that of Charlotte East. The latter uttered a joyful cry.

'There's Mr. Ashley! Loose her, sir, or I'll call to him.'

To have Mr. Ashley 'called to' on the point, would not be altogether agreeable to the feelings of young Anthony. 'You fool!' he exclaimed to Charlotte East, what harm do you suppose I meant, or thought of? You must be a very strange person yourself, to get such a thing into your imagination. Good night, Caroline.'

And, turning on his heel haughtily, Anthony Dare stalked off in the direction of Helstonleigh.

Mr. Ashley passed on, having noticed nothing, and Charlotte East wound her arm round the sobbing girl, subdued now, and led her home.

Anthony went straight to Pomeranian Knoll. He threw himself on a sofa in a very ill humour. Lord Hawkesley was occupied with Adelaide and her singing, and paid little attention to him.

At the close of the evening they left together, Anthony going out with the Viscount, and linking his arm within his lordship's, as they proceeded towards the Star Hotel, Lord Hawkesley's usual quarters when in Helstonleigh.

'I have got two hundred out of the governor,' began Anthony in a confidential tone. 'I shall have the cheque to-morrow.'

'What's two hundred, Dare?' slightingly spoke his lordship. 'It's nothing.'

'It was of no use trying for more to-night. The two hundred will stop present worry, Hawkesley; the future must be provided for when it comes.' And they walked on with a quicker step.

Mrs. Dare had looked at her watch as they departed. It was half-past eleven. She said she supposed they might as well be going to bed, and Mr. Dare roused himself. For the last half-hour he had been half asleep; quite asleep he did not choose to fall, in the young nobleman's presence. A viscount, to Lawyer Dare, was a viscount. 'Where's Herbert?' asked he, stretching himself.

Master Herbert, Joseph answered, had had

supper served (not being able to overget the short commons at dinner), and had gone to bed. The rest, save Adelaide, had gone before, free from want, from care, full of the good things of this life. The young Halliburtons, their cousins once removed, had knelt, and thanked God for the day's good, even though that day to them had been what all their days were now, one of poverty and privation. Not so the Dares. As children, for they were not in a heathen land, they had been taught to say their prayers at night; but as they grew older, the custom was suffered to fall into disuse. The family attended church on Sundays, grandly attired, and there ended the religion.

To bed and to sleep went they, all the household, old and young—Joseph, the man-servant, excepted. Sleepy Joseph stretched himself in a large chair to wait the return of Mr. Anthony: sleepy Joseph had so to stretch himself most nights. Mr. Anthony might come in in an hour's time, or Mr. Anthony might not come in until it was nearly time to commence the day's duties in the morning. It was all a chance; as poor Joseph knew to his cost.

Nine o'clock was the breakfast hour at Mr. Dare's, and the family were in general pretty punctual to it. On the following morning they were all assembled at the meal, Anthony rather red about the eyes, when Ann, the housemaid, entered.

'Here's a parcel for you, Mr. Anthony.'

She held in her arms a large, untidy sort of bundle, done round with string. Anthony turned his wondering eyes upon it.

'That! It can't be for me.'

'A boy brought it, and said it was for you, sir,' returned Ann, letting the cumbersome parcel fall on a chair. 'I asked if there was any answer, and he said there was not.'

'It must be from your tailor, Anthony,' said Mrs. Dare.

Anthony's consequence was offended at the suggestion. 'My tailor send me a parcel done up like that!' repeated he. 'He had better! He would get no more of my custom.'

'What an extraordinary direction!' exclaimed Julia, who had got up and drawn near, in her curiosity; '"Young Mister Antony Dare!" Just look, all of you.'

Anthony rose, and the rest followed, except Mr. Dare, who was busy with a county paper, and paid no attention. A happy thought darted into Minny's mind. 'I know!' she cried, clapping her hands. 'Cyril and George are playing Anthony a trick, like they played Miss Benyon.'

Anthony, too hastily taking up the view thus suggested, and inwardly vowing a not agreeable chastisement to the two, as soon as they should rush in to breakfast from school, took out his penknife and severed the string. The paper fell apart, and the contents rolled on the floor.

What on earth were they? What did they mean? A woman's gown, tawdry, but pretty; a shawl; a neck-scarf, with gold-coloured fringe; two pairs of gloves, the fingers worn into holes; a bow of handsome ribbon; a cameo brooch, fine and false; and one or two more such articles, not new, stood disclosed. The party around gazed in sheer amazement.

'If ever I saw such a collection as this!' exclaimed Mrs. Dare. 'It is a woman's clothing. Why should they have been sent to you, Anthony?'

Anthony's cheek wore rather a conscious colour just then. 'How should I know?' he replied. 'They must have been directed to me by mistake. Take the rags away, Ann'—spurning them with his foot—'and throw them in the dust-bin. Who knows what infected place they may have come from?'

Mrs. Dare and the young ladies shrieked out at the last suggestion, gathered their petticoats about them, and retired as far as the limits of the room allowed. Some enemy of malicious intent must have done it, they became convinced. Ann—no more liking to be infected with measles, or what not, than they—seized the tongs, gingerly lifted the articles inside the paper, dragged the lot outside the door, and called Joseph to carry them to the receptacle spoken of by Mr. Anthony.

Charlotte East had thought she would not do her work by halves.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FEAR GROWING GREATER.

We must leap over some months. A story, you know, cannot stand still, any more than we can.

Spring had come round. The sofa belonging to Mrs. Reece's parlour was in Mrs. Halliburton's, and Janey was lying on it—her blue eyes bright, her cheeks hectic, her fair curls falling in disorder. Through the autumn, through the winter, it had appeared that Dobbs's prognostications of evil for Jane were not to be borne out, for she had overgot the temporary indications of illness, and had continued well; but, with the early spring weather, Jane failed, and failed rapidly. The cough came back, and great weakness grew upon her. She was always wanting to be at rest, and would lie about anywhere. Spreading a cloak on the floor, with a pillow for her head, Janey would plant herself between her mamma and the fire, pulling the cloak up on the side near the door. One day Dobbs came in and saw her there.

'My heart alive!' uttered Dobbs, when she had

recovered her surprise; 'what are you lying down there for?'

'I am tired,' replied Janey; 'and there's nowhere else to lie. If I put three chairs together, it is not comfortable, and the pillow rolls off.'

'There's the sofa in our room,' said Dobbs. 'Why don't you lie on that?'

'So I do, you know, Dobbs; but I want to talk to mamma sometimes.'

Dobbs disappeared. Presently there was a floundering and thumping heard in the passage, and the sofa was propelled in by Dobbs, very red with the exertion. 'My missis is indignant to think that the child should be upon the floor,' cried she, wrathfully. 'One would suppose some folks were born without brains, or the sofa might have been asked for.'

'But, Dobbs,' said Janey—and *she* was allowed to 'Dobbs' as much as she pleased, unreproved—'what am I to lie on in your room?'

'Isn't there my easy chair, with the high footboard in front—as good as a bed when you let it out?' returned Dobbs, proceeding to place Janey comfortably on the sofa. 'And now let me say what I came in to say, when the sight of that child on the cold floor sent me shocked out again,' she added, turning to Jane. 'My missis's leg is no better to-day, and she has made up her mind to have Parry. It's erysipelas, as sure as a gun. Every other spring, about, she's laid up with it in

her legs, one or t'other of 'em. Ten weeks I have knowed her in bed with it——'

'The very best preventive to erysipelas is to take an occasional warm bath,' interrupted Jane.

The suggestion gave immense offence to Dobbs. 'A warm bath!' she uttered, ironically. 'And how, pray, should my missis get a warm bath? Sit herself down in a mashing-tub, and have a furnace of boiling water turned on to her? Them new-fangled notions may do for Londoners, but they are not known at Helstonleigh. Warm baths!' repeated Dobbs, with increased force of scorn. 'Hadn't you better propose a water-bed at once? I have heered that they are inventing *them*.'

'I have heard so, too,' pleasantly replied Jane.

'Well, my missis is a-going to have Parry up, and she intends that he shall see Janey, and give her some physic—if physic will be of use,' added Dobbs, with a disbelieving sniff. 'My missis says it will. She puts faith in Parry's physic as if it was gold; it's a good thing she's not ill often, or she'd let herself be poisoned if quantity could poison her! And, Janey, you'll take the physic, like a precious lamb; and heaps of nice things you shall have after it, to drive the taste out. Warm baths!' ejaculated Dobbs, as she went out, returning to the old grievance. 'I wonder what the world's a-coming to?'

Mr. Parry was called in, and soon had his two

regular patients there. Mrs. Reece was confined to her bed with erysipelas in her leg; and if Janey seemed better one day, she seemed worse the next. The surgeon did not say what was the matter with Jane. He ordered her everything good in the shape of food; he particularly ordered port wine. An hour after the latter order had been given, Dobbs appeared, with a full decanter in her hand.

'It's two glasses a day that she is to take—one at eleven and one at three,' cried she, without circumlocution.

'But, indeed, I cannot think of accepting so costly a thing from Mrs. Reece as port wine,' interrupted Jane, in consternation.

'You can do as you like, ma'am,' said Dobbs, with equanimity. 'Janey will accept it; she'll drink her two glasses of wine daily, if I have to come and drench her with it. And it won't be any cost out of my missis's pocket, if that's what you are thinking of,' logically proceeded Dobbs. 'Parry says it'll be a good three months afore she can take her wine again; so Janey can drink it for her. If my missis grudged her port wine or was cramped in pocket, I should not take my one glass a day, which I do regular.'

'I can never repay you and Mrs. Reece for your kindness and generosity to Jane,' sighed Mrs. Halliburton.

'You can do it when you are asked,' was Dobbs's retort. 'There's a wing and merrythought of a fowl

coming in for her dinner, with a nice bit of sweet boiled pork. I don't give myself the ceremony of cloth-laying, now my missis is a-bed, but just eat it in the rough; so the child had better have hers brought in here comfortable, till my missis is down again. And, Janey, you'll come up-stairs to tea to us; I have took up the easy chair.'

'Thank you very much, Dobbs,' said Janey.

'And don't you let them cormorants be eating her dinners or drinking her wine,' said Dobbs, fiercely, as she was going out. 'Keep a sharp look-out upon 'em.'

'They would not do it!' warmly replied Jane. 'You do not know my boys yet, if you think they would rob their sick sister.'

'I know that boys' stomachs are always on the crave for anything that's good,' retorted Dobbs. 'You might skin a boy if you were forced to it, but you'd never drive his nature out of him: and that's to be always having their mouths a-going!'

So she had even *this* help—the port wine! It seemed almost beyond belief, and Jane lost herself in thought.

'Mamma, you don't hear me!'

'Did you speak, Janey?'

'I say I think Dobbs got that fowl for me. Mrs. Reece is not eating meat, and Dobbs would not buy a fowl for herself. She will give me all the best parts, and pick the bones herself. You'll see. How kind they are to me! Whatever should I

have done now, mamma, if I had only our plain food? I know I could not eat it now.'

'God is over us, my dear child,' was Jane's reply. 'It is He who has directed this help to us; never doubt it, Jane. Whether we live or die,' she added, pointedly, 'we are in His hands, and He orders all things for the best.'

'Can to die be for the best?' asked Janey, setting herself to think over the question.

'Why, yes, my dear girl; certainly it is, if God wills it. How often have I talked to you about the REST after the grave! No more tears, no more partings. Which is best—to be here, or to go to that rest? Oh, Janey! we can put up surely with illness and with crosses here, if we may but attain to that. This world will last but for a little while at best; but that other will abide for ever and for ever.'

A summons from Mr. Parry's boy: Miss Halliburton's medicine had arrived. Miss Halliburton made a grievous face over it, when her mamma poured the dose out. 'I never *can* take it! It smells so nasty!'

Jane held the wine-glass towards her, a grave, kind smile upon her face. 'My darling, it is one of earth's little crosses; *try* and not rebel against it. Here's a bit of Patience's jam left, to take after it.'

Janey smiled bravely as she took the glass. 'It was not so bad as I thought, mamma,' said she, when she had swallowed it.

'Of course not, Janey; nothing is, that we set about with a brave heart.'

But, with every good thing, Janey did not improve. Her mother shrank from admitting the fact that was only growing too palpable; and Dobbs would come in and sit looking at Janey for a quarter of an hour together, never speaking.

'Why do you look at me so, Dobbs?' asked Janey, one day on a sudden. 'You were crying when you looked at me last night at dusk.'

Dobbs was rather taken aback. 'I had been peeling onions,' said she.

'Why do you shrink from looking at the truth?' an inward voice kept repeating in Mrs. Halliburton's heart. 'Is it right, or wise, or well to do so?' No; she knew that it could not be.

That same day, after Mr. Parry had paid his visit to Mrs. Reece, he looked in upon Janey. 'Am I getting better, sir?' she asked him. 'I want to go into the green fields again, and run about.

'Ah,' said he, 'we must wait for that, little maid.'

Jane went out to the door with him. When he put out his hand to say good morning, he saw that she was white with emotion, and could not speak readily. 'Will she live or die, Mr. Parry?' was the whispered question that came at last.

'Now, don't distress yourself, Mrs. Halliburton. In these lingering cases we must be content to wait the issue, whatever it may be.'

'I have had so much trouble of one sort or another, that I think I have become inured to it,' she continued, striving to speak more calmly. 'These several days I have been thinking to ask you the truth. If I am to lose her, sir, it will be better that I should know it beforehand: it will be easier for me to bear. She is in danger, is she not?'

'Yes,' he replied; 'I fear she is.'

'Is there any hope?'

'Well, you know, Mrs. Halliburton, while there is life there is hope.'

His tone was kind; but she could not well mistake that, of human hope, there was none. Her lips were pale—her chest was heaving. 'I understand,' she murmured. 'Tell me one other thing: how near is the end?'

'That I really cannot tell you,' he more readily replied. 'These cases vary much in their progression. Do not be downcast, Mrs. Halliburton. We must every one of us go, sooner or later. Sometimes I wish I could see all mine gone before me, rather than leave them behind, to the cares of this troublous world.'

He shook hands and departed. Jane crept softly upstairs to her own room, and was shut in for ten minutes. Poor thing! *she* could not spare time to the indulgence of grief, as others might! she must hasten to her ever continuous work. She had her task to do; and, ten minutes lost from it in the day, must be made up for at night.

As she was going down-stairs, with red eyes, Mrs. Reece heard her footstep, and called to her from her bed. 'Is that you, ma'am?'

So Jane had to go in. 'Are you better?' she inquired.

'No, ma'am, I don't see much improvement,' replied the old lady. 'Mr. Parry is going to change the lotion now; but it's a thing that will have its course. How is Janey? Does he say?'

'She is much the same,' said Jane. 'She gets no better. I fear she never will.'

'Ay! So Dobbs says; and it strikes me Parry has told her so. Now, ma'am, you spare nothing that can do her good. Whatever she fancies, tell Dobbs, and it shall be got. I would not, for the world, have a dying child stinted in her wants while I can help it. Don't spare the wine; don't spare anything.'

'A dying child!' The words, in spite of Jane's previous convictions; nay, of her knowledge; caused her heart to sink with a cold chill. She proceeded, as she had done many times before, to express a tithe of her gratitude to Mrs. Reece for the substantial kindness shown to Janey.

'Don't you say anything about it, ma'am,' returned the old lady, in her simple, straightforward way. 'I have neither chick nor child of my own, and both I and Dobbs have taken a liking for Janey. We don't think anything we can do too much for her. I have spoken to Parry—therefore,

don't you spare his services; at any hour of the day or night, you send for him, if you deem it necessary.'

With another try at heartfelt thanks, Jane went down. Full as her cup was to the brim, she was yet overwhelmed with the sense of kindness shown. From that time she set herself to the task of preparing Janey for the great change, by gradual degrees—a little now, a little then: to make her long for the translation to that better land.

One evening, about eight o'clock, Patience entered—partly to inquire after Janey, partly to ask William if he would go to bring Anna from Mrs. Ashley's, where she had been taking tea. Samuel Lynn was detained in the town on business, and Grace had been permitted to go out: therefore, Patience had no one to send. William quitted his books, and went out with alacrity. Patience sat down by Janey's sofa.

'I get so tired, Patience. I wish I had some pretty books to read! I have read all Anna's over and over again.'

'And she won't eat solids now, and she gets tired of mutton-broth, and sago, and egg-flip, and them things,' put in Dobbs, in an injured tone, who was also sitting there.

'I would try her with a little beef-tea, made with plenty of carrots, and thickened with arrow-root,' said Patience.

'Beef-tea, made with carrots, and thickened with arrowroot!' ungraciously responded Dobbs, who held in contempt everybody's cooking except her own.

'I can tell thee that it is one of the nicest things taken,' said Patience. 'It might be a change for the child.'

'How's it made?' grunted Dobbs. 'It might do for my missis: *she's* tired of mutton-broth.'

'Slice a pound of lean beef, and let it soak for two hours in a quart of cold water,' replied Patience. 'Then put the meat and the water into a saucepan, with a couple of large carrots, scraped and sliced. Let it warm gradually, and then simmer for about four hours, thee putting salt to taste. Strain it off; and, when cold, take off the fat. As the broth is wanted, stir it up, and take from it as much as may be required, boiling the portion, for a minute, with a little arrowroot.'

Dobbs condescended to intimate that, 'perhaps she might try it; though she'd be bound it was poor stuff.'

William had hastened to Mr. Ashley's. He was shown into a room to wait for Anna, and his attention was immediately attracted by a bookshelf full of children's story-books. He knew they were just what Janey was longing for. He had taken some in his hand, when Anna came in, ready for him, accompanied by Mrs. Ashley, Mary,

and Henry. Then William became aware of the liberty he had taken in touching the things, and, in his self-consciousness, the colour, as usual, rushed over his face. It was a frank, ingenuous face, with its fair, open forehead, and its earnest, dark grey eyes; and Mrs. Ashley thought it so.

'Were you looking at our books?' asked Henry, who was in a remarkably good humour.

'I am sorry to have touched them,' replied William. 'I was thinking of something else.'

'I'd be nearly sure thee were thinking of thy sister,' cried Anna, who had an ever-ready tongue.

'Yes, I was,' replied William, always candid. 'I was wishing she could read them.'

'I have told her about the books,' said Anna, turning from William to the rest. 'I related to her as much as I could remember of "Anna Ross:" that book which thee had in thy hand, William. She would so like to read them; she is always ill.'

'Is she very ill?' inquired Mrs. Ashley.

'She is dying,' replied Anna.

It was the first intimation William had received of the great fear. His countenance changed, his heart beat wildly. 'Oh, Anna! who says it?' he cried out, in a low, wailing tone.

There was a dead silence. Anna's announcement sounded sufficiently startling, and Mrs. Ashley looked with sympathy at the evidently agitated boy.

'There! that's my tongue!' cried Anna, repentantly. 'Patience says she wonders somebody does not cut it out for me.'

Mary Ashley—a fair, gentle girl, with large brown eyes, like Henry's—stepped forward, full of sympathy. 'I have heard of your sister from Anna,' she said. 'She is welcome to read all my books; you can take some to her now, and change them as often as you like.'

How pleased William was! Mary selected four, and gave them to him. 'Anna Ross,' 'The Blind Farmer,' 'Theophilus and Sophia,' and 'Margaret White.' Very old, some of the books, and childish; but admirably suited to what people were beginning to call Jane—a dying child.

'I say,' cried out Henry, a little aristocratic patronage in his tone, as William was departing, 'how do you get on with your Latin?'

'I get on very well. Not quite so fast as I should with a master. I have to puzzle out difficulties for myself, and I am not sure but that's one of the best ways to get on. I go on with my Greek, too; and Euclid, and——'

'How much time do you work?' burst forth Henry.

'From six o'clock till half-past nine. A little of the time I am helping my brothers.'

'There's perseverance, Henry!' cried Mrs. Ashley; and Master Henry shrugged his shoulders.

'Anna,' began William, as they walked along, 'how do you know that Janey is so ill?'

'Now, William, thee must ask thy mother whether she is ill or not. She may get well—how do I know? She was ill last summer, and Hannah Dobbs would have it she was in a bad way then; but she got well. Dost thee know what Patience says?'

'What?' asked William, eagerly.

'Patience says I have ten ears where I ought to have two; and I think thee hast the same. Fare thee well,' she added, as they reached her door. 'Thank thee for coming for me.'

William waited at the gate until Anna was admitted, and then hastened home. Jane was alone, working as usual.

'Mamma, is it true that Janey is dying?'

Jane's heart gave a leap; and poor William, as she saw, could scarcely speak for agitation. 'Who told you that?' she asked, in a low tone.

'Anna Lynn. *Is* it true?'

'William, I fear it may be. Don't grieve, child! don't grieve!'

William had laid his head down on the table, the sobs breaking forth. His poor mother quitted her seat, and bent her head down beside him, sobbing also.

'William, for my sake, don't grieve!' she whispered. 'God alone knows what is good. He would not take her unless it were for the best.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE END.

April passed. May was passing; and the end of Jane Halliburton was close at hand. There was no secret now about her state; but she was going away very peacefully.

In this month, May, there occurred another vacancy in the choir of the cathedral. Little Gar —but he was getting too big now to be called little Gar—proved to be the successful candidate; so that both boys were now in the choir.

'It will be such a help to me, the learning to chant, should I ever try for a minor canonry,' boasted Gar, who never tired of telling them that he meant to be a clergyman.

'Gar, dear, did you ever sit down and count the cost?' asked Mrs. Halliburton. 'I fear it will not be your luck to get to the University.'

'Labor omnia vincit,' cried out Gar. 'You have heard us stumbling over our Latin often enough, mamma, to know what that means. Frank will have need to count the cost, too, if he is ever to make himself into a barrister; and he says he *will* be one.'

'Oh, you two vain boys!' cried Jane, laughing.

'Mamma,' spoke up Janey from the sofa—and her breathing was laboured now—'is there harm in their wishing this?'

'Not at all. They are laudable aims. Only Frank and Gar are so poor and friendless that I fear the hopes are too ambitious to end in anything but disappointment.'

Janey called Gar to her, and pulled his face down on a level with hers, whispering softly, 'Strive well, Gar, and trust in God.'

Later, when Jane had to be out on an indispensable errand, Dobbs came in to sit with Janey. She brought her some jelly in a saucer.

'I am nearly tired of it, Dobbs,' said Janey. 'I get tired of everything. And I don't like to say so, because it seems so ungrateful.'

'It's the nature of illness to get tired of things,' responded Dobbs, who thought it was her mission never to cease buoying Janey up with hope. 'You'll be better when the hot weather comes in.'

'No, I shan't, Dobbs. I shall never get better now.'

A combination of feelings, indignation predominating, nearly took away Dobbs's breath. 'Who on earth has been a-putting that grim notion in your head?' asked she.

'It is true, Dobbs.'

'True!' ejaculated Dobbs. 'Who has been a-saying it to you? I want to know that.'

'Mamma for one. She——'

'Of all the stupids!' burst forth Dobbs, drowning what Janey was about to say. 'To frighten the child by telling her she's a-going to die!'

'It does not frighten me, Dobbs. I like to lie and think of it.'

Dobbs fell into a doubt whether Janey was in her senses. 'Like to lie and think of being screwed down in a coffin, and put into the cold ground, and left there till the judgment day!' uttered she.

'Oh, but, Dobbs, you must know better than that,' returned Jane. '*We* are not put into the coffin; it is only our bodies that are put into the coffin: we go into the world of departed spirits.'

'De-par-ted what?' ejaculated Dobbs, whose notions of the future—the life after this life—were not very definite; and who could not have been more astonished had Jane begun to talk to her in Greek.

'Mamma has always tried to explain these things to us,' said Jane. 'She has made them as clear to us as they can be made, and she has taught us not to fear death. She says a great mistake is often made by those who bring up children. They are taught to run away from death as something gloomy and frightful, instead of being shown its bright side.'

'Well, I never heard the like!' exclaimed Dobbs, lost in wonder. 'How can there be a

bright side to death?—in a horrid coffin with brass nails, and tin tacks that screw you down?'

Tears filled Janey's eyes. 'Oh, Dobbs, you must learn better than that, or how will you ever be reconciled to death? Don't you know that when we die, we—our spirit, that is, for it is our spirit that lives and thinks—leave our body behind us? There's no more consciousness in our body, and it is put into the grave till the last day. It is like the shell that the silkworm casts away when it comes into the moth: the life is in the moth; not in the cast-off shell. You cannot think what trouble mamma has taken with us always to explain these things; and she has talked to me so much lately.'

'And where does the spirit go—by which, I suppose, you mean the soul?' asked Dobbs.

Janey shook her head, to express her ignorance, at the best. 'It is all a mystery,' she said; 'but mamma has taught us to believe that there's a place for the departed, and that we shall be there. It is not to be supposed that the soul, a thing of life, could be boxed up in a coffin, Dobbs. When Jesus Christ said to the thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," he meant that world. It is a place of light and rest.'

'And the good and bad are there together?'

Again Janey shook her head. 'Don't you remember, in the parable of the rich man and the beggar, there was a great gulf between

them, and Abraham said that it could not be passed? I dare say it will be very peaceful and happy there: quite different from this world, where there's so much trouble and sickness. Why should I be afraid of death, Dobbs?'

Dobbs sat looking at her, and was some minutes before she spoke. 'Not afraid to die!' she slowly said. 'Well, I should be.'

Janey's eyes were wet. 'Nobody need be afraid to die when they have learnt to trust in God. Don't you know,' she answered with something like enthusiasm, 'that many people, when dying, have seen Jesus waiting for them? What does it matter, then, where our bodies are put? We are going to be along with Jesus. Indeed, Dobbs, there's nothing sad in dying, if you can only look at it in the right way. It is those who look at it in the wrong way that are afraid to die.'

'The child's as learned as a minister!' was Dobbs's inward comment. 'Our's told us last Sunday evening at chapel that we were all on the high road to perdition. I'd rather listen to her creed than to his: it sounds more encouraging. Their ma hasn't brought 'em up amiss; and that's the truth!'

The soliloquy was interrupted by the return of Mrs. Halliburton. Almost immediately afterwards some visitors came—Mary Ashley and Anna Lynn. It was the first time Mary had been there. She had come to bring Janey some more

books. She was one of those graceful children whom it is pleasant to look at. A contrast in attire she presented to the little Quakeress, with her silk dress, her straw hat, trimmed with a wreath of flowers and white ribbons, her dark, shining curls falling beneath it. She was much younger than her brother Henry; but there was a great resemblance between them—in the refined features, the bright complexion, and the soft, dark eyes. Somehow, through a remark made by Dobbs, the conversation turned upon Jane's non-recovery; and Mary Ashley heard with extreme wonder that death was not dreaded. 'Her ma has taught her different,' was Dobbs's comment.

'Mamma takes great pains with us,' observed Mary; 'but I should not like to die. How is it?' she added, turning to Mrs. Halliburton. 'Jane is not much older than I, and yet she does not dread it!'

'My dear,' was the reply, 'I think it is simply this. Those whom God is intending to take from the world, He often, in His mercy and wisdom, weans from the love of it. You are healthy and strong, and the world is pleasant to you. Jane has been so long weak and ill, that she no longer finds enjoyment in it; and this naturally causes her to look beyond this world to the rest and peace of the next. All things are well ordered.'

Mary Ashley began to think they must be. Chattering Anna, vain Anna, sat gazing at Mary's

pretty hat, at her drooping curls; none, save Anna herself, knew with what envious longing. Anna, at any rate, was not tired of the world.

The end drew closer and closer. There came a day when Jane did not get up; there came a second, and a third. On the fourth morning, Janey, who had passed a comfortable night, compared to some nights which had preceded it, was sitting up in bed when her brothers came in from school. They hurried over their breakfast, and ran up to her, carrying the remains of it in their hands.

The first few minutes after breakfast had always been devoted by Jane to reading to her children: in spite of her necessity for close working, they were so devoted still. 'I will read here this morning,' she observed as the boys stood around the bed.

'Mamma,' interrupted Janey, 'read about the holy city, in the Book of Revelation.'

Mrs. Halliburton turned to the twenty-first chapter, and had read to the twenty-third verse—'And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof'—when Jane suddenly started forward in bed, her eyes fixed on some point opposite. Mrs. Halliburton paused, and laid hold of her, to put her gently back again.

'Oh, mamma, don't keep me!' she said, in a

strangely thrilling tone; 'don't keep me! I see the light! I see papa!'

There was a strange light, not as of earth, in her own face, an ineffable smile on her lip, that told more of heaven. Her arms dropped; and she sunk back on the pillow. Jane Halliburton had gone to her heavenly Father; it may be also to her earthly one. Gar screamed.

Dobbs arrived in the midst of the commotion. And when Dobbs saw what had happened, she fell into a storm of anger, of passionate sobs, half ready to knock down Mrs. Halliburton with words, and the poor boys with blows. 'Why was she not called to see the last of her? The only young thing she had cared for in all the world, and yet she could not be allowed to wish her farewell! She'd never love another again, as long as her days lasted!' In vain they strove to explain to her that it was sudden, unexpected, momentary: Dobbs would not listen.

Mrs. Halliburton stole away from Dobbs's storm —anywhere. Her heart was brimfull. Although she had known that this must be the ending, now that it had come she was as one unprepared. In her shock of grief and sorrow, she was tempted for a moment—but only for a moment—to question the goodness and wisdom of God.

Some one called out to her from the foot of the stairs, and she went down. She had to go down; she could not shut herself up, like those can, who

have servants to be their deputies. Anna Lynn stood there, dressed for school.

'Friend Jane Halliburton, Patience has sent me to ask after Janey this morning. Is she better?'

'No, Anna. She is dead.'

Jane spoke with unnatural calmness. The child, scared at the words, backed away out at the garden door, and then flew to Patience with the news. It brought Patience in. Jane was nearly prostrate then.

'Nay, but thee art grieving sadly! Thee must not take on so.'

'Oh, Patience! why should it be?' she wailed aloud, in her despair and bereavement. 'Anna left in health and joyousness; my child taken! Surely God is dealing hardly with me.'

'Thee must not say that,' returned Patience, gravely. 'But thee are not thyself just now. What truth was it that I heard thee impress upon thy child not a week ago? That God's ways are not as our ways.'

CHAPTER VIII.

A WEDDING IN HONEY FAIR.

But that such contrasts are all too common in life, you might deem it scarcely seemly to go direct from a house of death to a house of marriage. This same morning, which witnessed the death of Jane Halliburton, witnessed also the wedding of Mary Ann Cross and Ben Tyrrett. Upon which there was wonderful rejoicing at the Crosses' house.

Of course, whether a wedding was a good one or a bad one (speaking in a pecuniary point of view), it was equally the custom to make a feast over it in Honey Fair. Benjamin Tyrrett was only what is called a jobber in the glove trade, earning fifteen or sixteen shillings a week; but Mary Ann Cross made up her mind to have him—in defiance of parental and other admonitions, that she ought to look over Ben's head. They had gone to work Honey Fair fashion, preparing nothing. Every shilling that Mary Ann Cross could spare went in finery—had long gone in finery. In vain Charlotte East impressed upon

her the necessity of saving; of waiting. Mary Ann would do neither one nor the other.

'All that you can spare from back debts, and from present actual wants, you should put by,' Charlotte had urged. 'You don't know how many more calls there are for money after marriage than before it.'

'There'll be two of us to earn it then,' logically replied Mary Ann.

'And two of you to live,' said Charlotte. 'To marry upon nothing is to rush into trouble.'

'How you do go on, Charlotte East! He'll earn his wages, and I shall earn mine. Where'll be the trouble? I shan't want to spend so much upon my back when I am married.'

'To marry as you are going to do, must bring trouble,' persisted Charlotte. 'He will manage to get together a few bits of cheap furniture, just what you can't do without, to put into one room; and there you will set up, neither of you having one sixpence laid by to fall back upon; and perhaps the furniture unpaid, hanging like a log upon you. What shall you do when children come, Mary Ann?'

This set Mary Ann Cross giggling. 'If ever I heard the like of you, Charlotte! If children do come, they must come, that's all. We can't send 'em back again.'

'No, you can't,' said Charlotte. 'They generally arrive in pretty good troops; and sometimes

there's little to welcome them on. Half the quarrels between man and wife, in our class of life, spring from nothing but large families and stinted means. Their tempers get soured with each other, and never get pleased again.'

'Folks must take their chance, Charlotte.'

'There's no *must* in it. You are nineteen, Ben Tyrrett's twenty-three; suppose you made up your minds to wait two or three years. You would be quite young enough then: and meanwhile, if both of you laid by, you would have something in hand to meet extra expenses, or sickness if it came.'

'Opinions differs,' shortly returned Mary Ann. 'If folks tell true, you were putting by ever so long for your marriage, and it all ended in smoke. I'd rather make sure of a husband when I can get him.'

An expression of pain crossed the face of Charlotte East. 'Whether I marry or not,' she answered calmly, 'I shall be none the worse for having laid money by, instead of squandering it. If the best man, that ever was born, came to me, I'd not marry him, if we had made no better provision for a rainy day than you and Tyrrett have. What can come of such unions, Mary Ann?'

'It's the way that most of us girls do marry,' returned Mary Ann.

'And what comes of it, I ask? *Blows* sometimes, Mary Ann; the workhouse sometimes; trouble always.'

'Is it true that you put by, Charlotte?'

'Yes. I put by what I can.'

'But how the wonder do you manage it? You dress as well as we do. I'm sure our backs take all our money; father pretty nigh keeps the house.'

'I dress better than you, in one sense, Mary Ann. I don't have on a silk gown one day, and a drabby petticoat in rags the next. Nobody ever sees me otherwise but neat and clean, and my clothes keep good a long while. It's the finery that runs away with your money. I am not ashamed to make a bonnet last two years; you'd have two in a season. Another thing, Mary Ann: I do not waste my time—I sit to my work; and I dare say I earn double what you do.'

'Let us hear what you earned last week, if it ain't impertinent,' was Mary Ann's answer.

'Ten and ninepence.'

'Look at that!' cried the girl, lifting her hands. 'I brought out but five and twopence, and I left no money for silk, and am in debt two quarterns. 'Melia was worse. Hers come to four and eleven. That surly old foreman says to me when he was a-paying, "What d'ye leave for silk, Mary Ann Cross? There's two quarterns down." "I know there is, sir," says I, "but I don't leave nothing to-day." He gave a grunt to that, the old file did.'

'And I suppose you spent your five shillings in some useless thing?'

'I had to pay up at Bankes's, and the rest went in a new peach bonnet-ribbon.'

'Peach! You should have bought white, if you must be married.'

'Thank you, Charlotte! What next? Do you suppose I'm a-going to be married in that shabby old straw, that I've worn all the spring? Not if I know it.'

'Where's your money to come from for a new one? There will be other things wanted, more essential than a bonnet.'

'I'll have a new one if I go in trust for it,' returned Mary Ann. 'Tyrrett buys the ring. And it is no use for you to preach, Charlotte; if you preach your tongue out, it'll do no good.'

Charlotte might, indeed, 'preach her tongue out,' before she would effect any change in the system of improvidence obtaining in Honey Fair. Neither Benjamin Tyrrett nor Mary Ann Cross was gifted with forethought, and they took no pains to acquire any.

The marriage was carried out, and this was the happy day. Mrs. Cross gave an entertainment in honour of the event, at which the bride and bridegroom assisted—as the French say—with as many others as the kitchen would hold. Tea for the ladies, pipes and ale for the gentlemen, supper for the whole, with spirits and water round.

How Mrs. Cross had contrived to go on so long without an *exposé*, she scarcely herself knew. The

wonder was, that she had gone on at all. It took the energies of her life to patch up her embarrassments, and hide her difficulties from her husband. The evil day, however, was only put off. It could not be averted.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EXPLOSION FOR MRS. CROSS.

THE evil day, hinted at in the last chapter, was not long in coming. It might not have fallen quite so soon, but for a misfortune which overtook Jacob Cross. The manufacturer, for whom he worked, died suddenly, and the business was immediately given up—the made gloves being bought up by a London house, and the stock in trade, leather, machines, &c., sold by auction. He had been a first-class manufacturer, doing nearly as large a business as Mr. Ashley; and not only Jacob Cross, but many more men in Honey Fair were thrown out of work—one of whom was Andrew Brumm; another, Timothy Carter. This happened but a few months after Mary Ann Cross's marriage.

It struck terror to the heart of Mrs. Cross. Though she had paid some of her debts, she had incurred others: indeed, the very fact of her having to pay, had caused her to incur fresh ones. Her position was ominous. She and Amelia had

worked for this same manufacturer, now dead, and of course they were at a standstill. Mary Ann Tyrrett had likewise worked for him: but she had quitted the paternal home; and with her we have nothing just now to do. The position of others was ominous, as well as that of Mrs. Cross. It was the autumn season, and trade was flat. Winter orders had gone in, and there was no cause to hurry those for the spring; so that the hands thrown out of work, both men and women, stood every chance of remaining out.

A gloom overspread Honey Fair. In many a household the articles, least needed, went, week after week, to the pawnbrokers, without being redeemed on the Saturday night, as in more prosperous times. Upon the proceeds the families had to exist. It was bad enough for those who were free from debt; but for those already labouring under it—above all, labouring under secret debt—it was something not to be told. Mrs. Cross had the nightmare regularly every night. Visions would come over her now and again of running away, if she had but known where to run to. The men would stand or sit at their doors all day, with pipes in their mouths: money was sure to be found for tobacco, by hook or by crook. There they would lounge in gloomy silence, varied by an occasional wordy war with their wives, who wished them anywhere else; or they and their pipes would saunter up and down the road, form-

ing into groups, to condole with each other and to abuse the glove trade.

One Monday afternoon there was a small assemblage in the kitchen of Jacob Cross—himself, Andrew Brumm, and Timothy Carter. Brumm and Carter were, in one sense, more fortunate than Cross; inasmuch as that their respective wives worked each for another house, not the one which had closed; therefore they retained their employment. The fact, however, appeared to afford little consolation to the two men, for they were keeping up a chorus of grumbling, when Joe Fisher staggered in—if you have not forgotten him.

Fisher had hitherto managed, to the intense surprise of everybody, to keep out of the workhouse. He would get taken on for a job of work now and then; but manufacturers were chary of employing Joe Fisher. For one thing, he gave way to drink. A disreputable looking object had he become: a tattered coat and waistcoat, pantaloons in rags, and not the ghost of a shirt. People wondered how he found money for drink.

'Who'll give us house room?' was his salutation, as he pushed himself in, his eyes haggard, his legs unsteady, his cheeks thin from incipient famine. 'Will nobody give us a corner to lie in?'

The men took their pipes from their mouths. 'Be you turned out at last, Joe?'

'We be turned out,' replied Joe. 'And my missis close upon her down-lying.'

Mrs. Cross, who was at the back of the kitchen, washing out her potato saucepan, of which frugal edible, seasoned with salt, the family dinner had consisted, put in her word.

'You couldn't expect nothing else, Joe Fisher. There you have been, in them folks's furnished room, a-paying nothing, and a-paying nothing, and you a-drinking everlasting. They have threatened you long enough. Last week, you know, they took a vow as you should go this.'

'Where's the wife and little uns?' asked meek Timothy Carter.

'You can look at 'em,' responded Fisher. 'They bain't a hundred miles off, they bain't. They bain't out of view.'

He gave a flourish of his hand towards the road, and the men and Mrs. Cross crowded to the door to reconnoitre. In the middle of the lane, crouched down in its sloppy mud, for the weather had been bad, and it was very wet under foot, was untidy Sukey Fisher—a woman all skin and bone now, her face hopeless and desperate. She wore no cap, and her matted hair fell on her gown—such a gown! all tatters and dirt. Several young children huddled around her.

'Untidy creature!' muttered Mrs. Cross to herself. 'She is as fond of a drop as her lazy, quarrelsome husband; and this is what they have brought it to, between 'em! Them poor little objects of young uns 'ud be as well dead as alive.'

'Look at 'em!' began Fisher. 'And they call this a free country! They call it a country as is a pattern to others, and a refuge for the needy. Why don't the Goverment, what opened our ports to them foreign French, and what keeps 'em open, come down and take a look at my wife a-squatting there?—turned out of our room, without a place to put our heads into!'

'If you hadn't put quite as much inside your head, Joe Fisher, and been a-doing of it for years, you might have had more for the outside on't now,' again spoke Mrs. Cross, in her sharp tones. The woman was not a naturally sharp one, like some of them in Honey Fair; but the miserable fear she lived in, added to their present privations, told upon her temper.

'Hold your magging,' said Joe Fisher. 'I don't never like to quarrel with petticuts, one's own belongings excepted. All as I say, Mother Cross, is, don't *you* mag.'

Mrs. Cross made no reply to this, and Fisher resumed—

'This comes of letting the Goverment and the masters have their own way! If we had got that there strike among us, that I've so often telled ye on, things 'ud be different. Let a man sit down a minute, Cross.'

Cross civilly pushed a chair towards him, concentrating his attention afterwards upon Mrs.

Fisher. A crowd had collected round her; and Mrs. Buffle, with a feeling of humanity that few had given that lady credit for possessing, sent out an old woollen shawl to the shivering woman, and a basin of hasty pudding. The mother could not feed the whining children fast enough with the one iron spoon.

A young man ran up to Cross's door. It was Adam Thorneycroft. He did not live in Honey Fair, but often found his way to it, although Charlotte had rejected him. 'Is Joe Fisher here?' asked he. 'Fisher, why don't you go to the workhouse and tell them the state your wife is in? She can't stop there.'

'Her state is no concern of your'n, Master Thorneycroft,' was the sullen answer.

Thorneycroft turned on his heel, a scornful gesture escaping him at Fisher's half-stupid condition. 'I must be off to my work,' he observed; 'but can't one of you, who are gentlemen at large, just go to the workhouse and acquaint them with the woman's helplessness, and that of her children around her?'

Timothy Carter responded to it. 'I'll go,' said he. 'I haven't got nothing to do with myself this afternoon.'

Timothy and Adam walked away together, Tim treading with gingerly feet past his own door, lest his wife should recognize his step, bolt out, and

stop him. Charlotte East was standing at her door, and Adam halted. Timothy walked on: he did not feel himself perfectly safe yet.

'What a life that poor woman's is!' exclaimed Charlotte.

'Ay,' assented Adam; 'and all through Fisher's not sticking to his work.'

Charlotte moved her face gravely towards him. 'Say, through his drinking, Adam.'

'Do you speak that as a warning, Charlotte?' he continued. 'I think you mean well by me, but you go just the wrong way to show it. If you wanted me to keep steady, you should have come and helped me in it. Good-bye. I am late.'

'Gentlemen at large, young Thorney called us!' cried Jacob Cross to his friend Brumm, as Fisher went off, and they sat down again. 'He's not far out. What's to be the end on't.'

'Why, the work'us,' responded Mrs. Cross, who rarely let an opportunity slip of putting in her own opinion. 'The work'us for us, as well as for the Fishers, unless things take a turn. When great, big, able-bodied men is throwed out o' work, and yet has got to eat and drink, and other folks at home has got to eat and drink, and nothing to stay their stomachs upon, the work'us can't be far off.'

'Never for me!' said Andrew Brumm. 'I'll work to keep me and mine out on it, if it is at breaking stones upon the road. I know one

thing; if ever I do get into certain work again, I'll make my missis be a bit providenter than afore.'

'Bell Brumm ain't one of the provident sort,' dissented Mrs. Cross. 'How do you manage to get along at all, Drew, these bad times? You don't seem to get into trouble.'

'Well, we manage somehow,' replied Andrew. 'But we have to pinch. My missis sticks at her work, now I be out on't. She hardly looks off it; and I does the house, and sees to the children. Nine shilling, all but her silk, she earned last week. And, finding that we *can* exist on that, after a fashion, has set me a thinking that when my good wages was added to it, we ought to have put by for a rainy day,' he continued, after a pause. 'Just let me get the chance again!'

'It's surprising the miracles wages works when folks ain't earning none!' put in Mrs. Cross, in a tone of irony, who did not altogether like the turn the conversation was taking. 'When you get into work again, Drew Brumm, your wife won't be no more able to save nor the rest of us is.'

'But she shall,' returned Andrew. 'And she sees for herself now that it might be done.'

'I was a-making a calkelation yesterday how long we might hold out on our household things,' observed Jacob Cross; a silent man, in general. 'If none on us can get work, they'll have to go, piecemeal. One can't clam; one must live upon something.'

'I'm resolved upon one point—that I won't have no underhand debt again,' resumed Brumm. 'Last spring I found out the flaring trade that my missis was carrying on with them Bankes's—and the way I come to know of it was funny: but never mind that. "Bell," says I to her, "I'd rather sell off all I've got and go tramping the country, than I'd live with a sword over my head"—which debt is. And I went down to Bankes's and said to 'em, "If you let my wife get into debt again, I won't pay it, as I now give you notice, and I'll have you up before the justices for a pest." I thought I'd make it strong, you see, Cross. And I paid off their bill, so much a week, and got shut of 'em. Them Bankes's does more mischief in Honey Fair than everything else put together.'

'Why, what do Bankes's do?' asked Jacob, in happy ignorance.

'Do!' returned Brumm. 'Don't you know—'

But at that critical moment, Mrs. Cross, in bustling behind Andrew Brumm's chair, which was on the tilt, contrived to get her foot entangled in it. Brumm, his chair, and his pipe all came down together.

'Mercy on us!' uttered Jacob Cross, coming to the rescue. 'How did you manage that, Brumm?'

Before Brumm could answer, or had well gathered himself up, there was another visitor—Mr. Abbott, the landlord of at least a third of Honey Fair. He had come on his usual Mon-

day's errand. Jacob Cross put down his pipe and touched his hat, which, in the fashionable manners of Honey Fair, was worn in-doors. It was not often that the landlord and the men came in contact.

'Are you ready for me, Mrs. Cross?'

'We are not ready to-day, sir,' interposed Jacob. 'You must please to give us a little grace these hard times, sir. The moment I be in work again, I'll think of you, afore I think of ourselves.'

'I have given all the grace I can give,' replied Mr. Abbott, a hard, surly man. 'You must either pay, or turn out: I don't care which.'

'I'll pay you as soon as I am in work, sir; you may count upon it. As to turning out, sir, where could I turn to? You'd not let me take out my furniture, and we can't sit down in the street, as Fisher's wife is a-doing.'

Mr. Abbott turned to the door. When he came back, a man was with him. 'I must trouble you to give this man house-room for a few days. As you won't go out, he must stop in, to see that your goods stop in.'

Cross's spirit rose within him. 'It's a hard way to treat a man, sir! I have lived under you for years, and you have had your rent regular.'

'Regular!' exclaimed the landlord. 'I have had more trouble to get it from your wife, since Bankes's came to Helstonleigh, than from anybody else in Honey Fair.'

Cross did not understand this. He was too much absorbed by the point in question to ask an explanation. 'There's only three weeks owing to you, sir, and——'

'Three weeks!' interrupted Mr. Abbott; 'there are nine weeks owing to me. Nine weeks to-day!'

Jacob Cross stood confounded. 'Who says there's nine weeks?' asked he.

'I say so. Your wife can say so. Ask her.'

But Mrs. Cross, with a scared face and white lips, whisked through the door, and whisked down Honey Fair. The explosion had come.

Mr. Abbott, wasting no more words, departed, leaving the unwelcome visitor behind him. Andrew Brumm came in again from outside, where he had stood, out of delicacy, feeling thankful that *his* rent was all right. It was pinching work, but Andrew was beginning to learn that debt pinches the mind, worse than hunger pinches the body.

'Comrade,' whispered he, grasping Cross's hand, 'it's all along of them Bankes's. The women buy their fal-lals and their finery, and the weekly payments to 'em must be kept up, whether or no, for fear Bankes's should let out on't to us, and ask us for the money. In course the rent and other things gets behind. Half the women round us be knee-deep in Bankes's books.'

'Why couldn't you have told me this afore?' demanded Cross, in his astonishment.

'It's not my province to interfere with other men's wives,' was the sensible answer of Brumm.

'Where's she got to?' cried Jacob, looking round for his wife. 'I'll come to the bottom o' this. Nine weeks' rent owing; and her salving me up that 'twas only three!'

Jacob might well say, 'Where's she got to?' Mrs. Cross had glided down Honey Fair, into the first friendly door that happened to be open. That was Mrs. Carter's. 'For mercy's sake, let's stop here a minute, Elizabeth Carter!' exclaimed she. 'We have got the bums in!'

Mrs. Carter was rubbing up some brass candlesticks. Work ran short with her that week, and therefore she spent it in cleaning, which was her notion of taking holiday; scrubbing and scouring from morning till night. She turned round and stared at Mrs. Cross, who, with her white face and her gasping breath, had sunk down upon a chair.

'What on earth's the matter?'

'Abbott have brought it out to my husband that I owes nine weeks' rent, and he's a-telling him about Bankes's, and now he has gone and put a bum into us!'

'More soft you, to have had to do with Bankes's!' was the sympathy offered by Mrs. Carter. 'You couldn't expect nothing less.'

'That old skinflint of a Abbott—— '

Mrs. Cross stopped short. She opened the staircase door about an inch, and humbly twisted

herself through the aperture. Who should be standing there to hear her, having followed her in, but Mr. Abbott himself.

He had no need to say, 'Ready, Mrs. Carter?' Mrs. Carter always was ready. She paid him weekly, and asked no favour. The payment made, he departed again, and Mrs. Cross emerged from her retreat.

'*You* can pay him!' she exclaimed, with some envy. 'And Timothy's out o' work, too; and you be slack! How do you manage it?'

'I'm not a fool,' was the logical response of Mrs. Carter. 'If I spent my earnings when they be a-coming in regular, or let Tim keep his to his own cheek, where should we be, in a time like this? I have got my understanding about me.'

Mrs. Carter did not praise her understanding without cause. Whatever social virtues she may have lacked, she was rich in thrift, in forethought. Had Timothy remained out of work for a twelvemonth, they would not have been put to shifts.

'I'm afraid to go back!' cried Mrs. Cross.

'So should I be, if I got myself into your mess.'

The offered sympathy not being consolatory to her present frame of mind, Mrs. Cross departed. Home, at present, she dared not go. She went about Honey Fair, seeking the gossiping pity which Elizabeth Carter had declined to give, but which she was yearning for. Thus she spent an hour or two.

Meanwhile the news had been spreading through Honey Fair, 'Crosses have got the bums in;' and Mary Ann, hearing it, flew home to know whether it was correct. She—partly through fear, partly in the security from paternal correction, which was imparted to her by the feeling that she was Mary Ann Tyrrett, and no longer Mary Ann Cross—yielded to her father's questions, and made full confession. Debts here, debts there, debts everywhere. Cross was overwhelmed; and when his wife at length came in, he quietly knocked her down.

The 'bum' advanced to the rescue. 'If you dare to come between man and wife,' raved Cross, lifting his arm menacingly, 'I'll serve you the same.' He was a peaceful-tempered man, but this business terribly exasperated him. 'You'll come to die in the work'us,' he uttered to his wife. 'And serve you right! It's your doings that have broke up our home.'

'No,' retorted she, passionately, as she lifted herself from the floor; 'it's your squanderings in the publics o' nights, that have helped to break up our home.'

It was something of both.

The quarrel was interrupted by a commotion outside, and Mrs. Cross darted out to look—glad, perhaps, to escape from her husband's anger. An official from the workhouse had come down with an order for the admission of Susan Fisher in-

stanter. Timothy Carter, in his meek and humane spirit, had so enlarged upon the state of affairs in general, touching Mrs. Fisher, that the workhouse bestirred itself. An officer was despatched to marshal them into it at once. The uproar was caused by her resistance: she was still sitting in the road.

'I won't go into the work'us,' she screamed; 'I won't go there to be parted from my children and my husband. If I be to die, I'll die out here.'

'Just you get up and march, and don't let's have no row,' said the officer. 'Else I'll fetch a wheel-barrer, and wheel ye to it.'

She resisted, shrieking and flinging her arms and her wild hair about her, as only a foolish woman would do; the children, alarmed, clung to her and cried, and all Honey Fair came out to look. Mr. Joe Fisher also staggered up, in a state not to be described. He had been invited by some friend, more sympathising than judicious, to solace his troubles with strong waters; and down he fell in the mud, helpless.

'Well, here's a pretty kettle of fish!' cried the perplexed workhouse man. 'A nice pair, they be! How I am to get 'em both there, is beyond me! She can walk, if she's forced to it; but he can't, the beast! They spends their money on their sotting insides, and when they have got no more to spend, they comes to us to keep 'em! I must get a open cart.'

The open cart was procured from somewhere, and brought to the scene, a policeman in attendance; and the children were lifted into it, one by one. Next the man was thrown in, like a clod; and then came the woman's turn. With much struggling and kicking, with shrieks that might have been heard a mile off, she was at length hoisted into it. But she tumbled out again; raving that 'no work'us shouldn't hold her.' The official raved in turn; and Honey Fair hugged itself. It had not had the gratification of beholding so exciting a scene for many a day; to say nothing of the satisfaction it derived from hearing the workhouse set at defiance.

The official and the policeman at length conquered. She was secured, and the cart started at a snail's pace with its load—Mrs. Fisher setting up a prolonged and dismal lamentation, not unlike an Irish howl; and Honey Fair, in its curiosity, following the cart as its train.

CHAPTER X.

A SHILLING IN THE WASTE PAPER BASKET.

'WHOSE shilling is this on my desk?' inquired Mr. Ashley of Samuel Lynn, one morning towards the close of the summer.

'I cannot tell thee,' was the reply of the Quaker. 'I know nothing of it.'

'It is none of mine, to my knowledge,' remarked Mr. Ashley.

'What shilling is that on the master's desk?' repeated Samuel Lynn to William when he returned into his own room, where William was.

'I put a shilling on the desk this morning, replied William. 'I found it in the waste paper basket.'

'Thee go in, then, and tell the master.'

William did so. 'The shilling rolled out of the waste paper basket, sir,' said he, entering the counting house, and approaching Mr. Ashley.

Mr. Ashley was a man remarkably exact in his accounts. He had missed no shilling, and he did not think it was his. 'What should bring a shil-

ling in the waste paper basket?' he asked. 'It may have rolled out of your own pocket.'

William could have smiled at the remark. A shilling out of *his* pocket! 'Oh, no, sir, it did not.'

Mr. Ashley sat looking earnestly at William—as the latter fancied. In reality he was buried deep in his own thoughts. But William felt uncomfortable under the survey, and his face flushed to a glowing crimson. Why should he feel uncomfortable? What should cause the flush?

This. Since Janey's death, some months ago now, their circumstances had been more straitened than ever; of course, there had been expenses attending it, and Mrs. Halliburton was paying them off weekly. Bread and potatoes, and a little milk, would be their food often. On the previous night Jane had a sick head-ache. Some tea would have been acceptable, but she had neither tea nor money in the house; and she was firm to her resolution not to purchase on trust. On this morning early, when William rose, he found his mother down before him, at her work as usual. Her head felt better, she said; it might get quite well if she had but some tea; but she had not, and—there was an end of it. William went out, ardently wishing (in the vague, profitless manner that he might have wished for Aladdin's lamp) that he had only a shilling to procure some for her. When, half an hour after, this shilling rolled out of the waste

paper basket, as he was shaking it in Mr. Ashley's counting-house, a strong temptation—not to take it, but to wish that he might take it, that it was not wrong to take it—rushed over him. He put it down on the desk, and turned from it—turned from the temptation, for the shilling seemed to scorch his fingers. The remembrance of this wish—it sounded to him like a dishonest one—had brought the vivid colour to his face, under what he deemed Mr. Ashley's scrutiny. That gentleman observed it.

'What are you turning red for?'

This crowned all. The red in William's face changed to scarlet.

Mr. Ashley was surprised. He came to the conclusion that some mystery must be connected with the shilling—something wrong. He determined to fathom it. 'Why do you look confused?' he resumed.

'It was only at my own thoughts, sir.'

'What are they? Let me hear them.'

William hesitated. 'I would rather not tell them, sir.'

'But I would rather you did.' Mr. Ashley spoke quietly, as usual; but there lay command in the quietest tone of Mr. Ashley's.

Implicit obedience had been enjoined upon the Halliburtons from their earliest childhood. In that manufactory Mr. Ashley was William's *master*, and he believed he had no resource but to comply,

William was of a remarkably ingenuous nature; and if he had to impart a thing, he did not do it by halves, although it might tell against himself.

'When I found that shilling this morning, sir, the thought came over me to wish it was mine—to wish that I might take it without doing ill. The thought did not come over me *to take it*,' he added, raising his truthful eyes to Mr. Ashley's 'only to wish that it was not wrong to do so. When you looked at me so earnestly, sir, I fancied you could see what my thoughts had been. And they were not honourable thoughts.'

'Did you ever take money that was not yours?' asked Mr. Ashley, after a pause.

William looked surprised. 'No, sir, never.'

Mr. Ashley paused again. 'I have known children help themselves to half-pence and pence, and think it little crime.'

The boy shook his head. 'We have been taught better than that, sir. And, besides the crime, money taken in that way would bring us no good, only trouble. It could not prosper.'

'Tell me why you think that.'

'My mother has always taught us that a bad action can never prosper in the end.'

'I suppose you coveted the shilling for marbles; or for sweetmeats?'

'Oh, no, sir. It was not for myself that I wished it.'

'Then for whom? For what?'

This caused William's face to flush again. Mr. Ashley questioned till he drew from him the particulars: how that he had wished to buy some tea, and why he had wished it.

'I have heard,' remarked Mr. Ashley, after listening, 'that you have many privations to put up with.'

'It is true, sir. But we don't so much care for them, if we only *can* put up with them. My mother says she knows better days will be in store for us, if we only bear on patiently. I am sure we boys ought to do so, if she can. It is worse for her than for us.'

There ensued another searching question from Mr. Ashley. 'Have you ever, when alone in the egg-house, amidst its thousands of eggs, been tempted to pocket a few to carry home?'

For one moment William suffered a flash of resentment to cross his countenance. The next, his eyes filled with tears. He felt deeply hurt.

'No, sir, I have not. I hope you do not fear that I am capable of it?'

'No, I do not,' said Mr. Ashley. 'Your father was a clergyman, I think I have heard?'

'He was intended for a clergyman, sir, but he did not get to the University. His father was a clergyman — a rector in Devonshire; and my mother's father was a clergyman in London. My uncle Francis is also a clergyman; but only a

curate. We are gentlepeople reared, though we are poor. We would not take eggs.'

Mr. Ashley suppressed a smile. 'I conclude you and your brothers live in hopes some time to regain your position in life?'

'Yes, sir. I think it is that hope that makes us put up with hard things so well.'

'What do you think of being?'

William's countenance fell. 'There is not so much chance of my getting on, sir, as there is for my brothers. Frank and Gar are hopeful enough, but I don't look forward to anything good for me. My mother says if I only help her, I shall be doing my duty.'

'Your sister died in a decline,' remarked Mr. Ashley. 'These home privations must have told upon her.'

William's face brightened. 'She had everything she wanted, sir; everything, even to port wine. Mrs. Reece and Dobbs took a liking for her, when they first came, and they never let her wish for anything. Mamma says that Jane's wants having been supplied in so extraordinary a manner, ought to teach us how certainly God is looking over us and taking care of us; that all things, when they come to be essentials, will no doubt be supplied to us, as they were to her.'

'What a perfect trust in God that boy seems to have?' mused Mr. Ashley, when he dismissed William. 'Mrs. Halliburton must be a mother in

a thousand. And he will make a man in a thousand, unless I am mistaken. Truthful, open, candid—*I* don't know a boy like him!'

About five minutes before the great bell was rung at one o'clock, William was called into the counting-house. 'I have been casting up my cash, and find I am a shilling short,' observed Mr. Ashley. 'Therefore the shilling that you found is no doubt the missing one. I shall give it to you,' he continued. 'A reward for telling me the straightforward truth when I questioned you.'

William took the shilling—as he supposed. 'Here are two!' he exclaimed, in his surprise.

'You cannot buy much tea with one; and that is what you were thinking of. Would you like to be apprenticed to me?' Mr. Ashley resumed, drowning the boy's thanks.

The question took William entirely by storm. He was at a loss what to answer. He would have been equally at a loss had he been accorded a whole week to deliberate upon it. He looked foolish, and said he could not tell.

'Would you like the business?' pursued Mr. Ashley.

'I like the business very well, sir, now I'm used to it. But I could not hope ever to get on to be a master.'

'There's no knowing what you may get on to be, if you are steady and persevering. Masters

don't begin at the top of the tree; they begin at the bottom and work up to it. At least, that is the case with a great many. In becoming an apprentice you would occupy a superior position in the manufactory to what you do now.'

'Joe Stubbs is an apprentice, is he not, sir?'

'I will explain it to you, if you do not understand,' said Mr. Ashley. 'Joe Stubbs is apprenticed to one branch of the business, the cutting; John Braithwait is an apprentice to the staining, and so on. These lads expect to remain workmen all their lives, working at their own peculiar branch. You would not be apprenticed to any one branch, but to the whole, with a view of your becoming hereafter a manager or a master; in like manner that I might apprentice my son, were he intended for the business.'

William thought he should like this. Suddenly his countenance fell.

'What now?' asked Mr. Ashley.

'I have heard, sir, that the apprentices do not earn wages at first. I—I am afraid we could not well do at home without mine.'

'You need not concern yourself with what you hear, or with what others earn or don't earn. I should give you eight shillings a-week, instead of four; and you would retain your evenings for study as you do now. I do not see any different or better opening for you,' continued Mr. Ashley; 'but should any such arise, hereafter, through

your mother's relatives, or from any other channel, I would not stand in the way of your advancement, but would consent to cancel your indentures. Do you understand what I have been saying?'

'Yes, sir, I do. Thank you very much.'

'You can speak to Mrs. Halliburton about it, and hear what her wishes may be,' concluded Mr. Ashley.

The result was, that William was bound apprentice to Mr. Ashley. 'I can tell thee, thee has found favour with the master,' remarked Samuel Lynn to William. 'He has made thee his apprentice, and has admitted thee, I hear, to the companionship of his son. They are proofs that he judges well of thee. Pay thee attention to deserve it.'

It was quite true that William was admitted to the occasional companionship of Henry Ashley. Henry had taken a fancy to him, and would get him there to help him stumble through his Latin.

The next to be apprenticed to Mr. Ashley, and almost at the same time, was Cyril Dare. But when he found that he was to be the fellow-apprentice with William Halliburton, the two on a level in every respect, except in wages—and of wages Master Cyril was at first to gain none—he was most indignant, and complained, in an explosive way, to his father. 'Can't you speak to Mr. Ashley, sir?'

'Where would be the use?' asked Mr. Dare. 'There's not a man in Helstonleigh would brook interference in his affairs less than Thomas Ashley. If one of the two apprentices must leave, because they are too much for each other's company, it would be you, Cyril, rely upon it.'

Cyril growled; but, as Mr. Dare said, there was no help for it. And he and William had to get on together in the best way they could. Cyril had thought that he would be the only gentleman-apprentice at Mr. Ashley's. There was a marked distinction observed in a manufactory, between the common apprentices, who did the rough work, and what were called the gentlemen-apprentices. It did not please Cyril that William should have been made one of the latter.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SCHOOL-BOYS' NOTES.

As the time went on, Jane's brain grew very busy. Its care was the education of her boys—a perplexing theme. So far as the classics went, they were progressing. Frank and Gar certainly were not pushed on as they might have been, for Helstonleigh collegiate school was not at that time renowned for its pushing qualities; but the boys had a spur in themselves. Jane never ceased to urge them to attention, to strive after self-progress; not by harsh reproaches, as some children have to hear, but by loving encouragement and gentle persuasion. She would call up pleasant pictures of the future, when they should have surmounted the difficulties of upward toil, and be reaping their reward. It had ever been her custom to treat her children as friends; as friends and companions, more than as children. I am not sure but it is a good plan in all cases, but it undoubtedly is so where children are naturally well disposed and intelligent. Even when they were little, she would converse and reason with

them, so far as their understandings would permit. The primary thing she inculcated was the habit of unquestioning obedience. This, secured in their earliest childhood, she could afford to reason with them as they grew older; to appeal to their own sense of intelligence; to show them how to form and exercise a right judgment. Had the children been wilful, deceitful, or opposed to her, her plan must have been different; compulsion must have taken the place of reasoning. When they did anything wrong—all children will, or they are not children—she would take the offender to her alone. There would be no scolding; but in a grave, calm, loving voice she would say, 'Was this right? Did you forget that you were doing wrong and would grieve me? Did you forget that you were offending the great God?' And so she would talk; and teach them to do right in all things, for the sake of the right, for the sake of doing their duty to Heaven and to man. These lessons, from a mother loved as Jane was, could not fail to take root and bear seed. The young Halliburtons were in fair training to make not only good, but admirable men.

Jane inculcated another valuable lesson. In all perplexity, trouble, or untoward misfortune, she taught them to *look it full in the face;* not to fly from it, as is the too common custom, but to meet it and do the best with it. She knew that of trouble, as of terror, the looking it direct in the

face takes away half its sting: and so she was teaching them to look, not only by precept, but by example. With such minds, such training to work upon, there was little need to *urge* them to apply closely to their studies; they saw its necessity themselves, and acted upon it. 'It is your only chance, my darlings, of getting on in life,' she would say. 'You are wishing to be good and great men; and I think perhaps you may be, if you persevere. It is a tempting thing, I know, to quit wearying tasks for play or idleness; but do not yield to it. Look to the future. When you feel tired, out of sorts, as if Latin were the greatest grievance upon earth, say to yourselves, "It is my duty to keep on, and my duty I must do. If I turn idle now, my past application will be lost; but, if I persevere, I may get bravely on to the end." Be brave, darlings, for my sake.'

And the boys were so. Thus it would happen that when the rest of the school were talking, or idling, or being caned, the Halliburtons were at work. The head master could not fail to observe their steady application; and he more than once held them up as an example to the school.

So far, so good. But though the classics are essential parts of a liberal education, they do not comprise all its requisites. And nothing else was taught in the college school. There certainly was

a writing-master, and something like an initiation into the first rules of arithmetic was attempted; but not a boy in the charity school, hard by, but could have shamed the college boys in adding up a column of figures or writing a page. As to their English——. You should have seen them attempt to write a letter. In short, the college school ignored everything except Latin and Greek.

This state of affairs gave great concern to Jane. 'Unless I can organise some plan, my boys will grow up dunces,' she said to herself. And a plan she did organise. None could remedy this so well as herself; she, so thoroughly educated in all essential things. It would take two hours from her work, but for the sake of her boys she would sacrifice that. Every night, therefore, except Saturday, as soon as they had prepared their lessons for school—and in doing that they were helped by William—she quitted her work, and set herself to be their instructor. History, geography, astronomy, composition, and so on. You can fill up the list.

And she had her reward. The boys advanced rapidly. As the months, the quarters went on, it was only so much the more instruction gained by them.

I think you must be indulged with a sight of one of these college school notes. But, first of all, suppose we read one written by Frank.

'DEAR GLENN,—Thanks for wishing me to join your fishing expedition the day after to-morrow, but I can't come. My mother says as I had holiday from college one day last week, it will not do to ask for it again. You told me to send word this evening whether or not, so I drop you this note. I should like to go, and shall be thinking of you all day. Mind you let me have a sight of the fish you bring home. Yours,

'FRANK HALLIBURTON.'

The note was addressed 'Glenn senior,' and Gar was ordered to deliver it at Glenn senior's house. Glenn, senior, who was a king's scholar, not a chorister, made a wry face over it when delivered, and sat down, on the spur of the moment, to answer it:

'DEER HALIBURTON,—Its all stuf about not asking for leve again what do the musty old prebens care who gets leve therell be enuff to sing without you tell your mother I cant excuse you from our party theirs 8 of us going and a stuning baxket of progg as good go out for a day's fishing has stop at home on a holiday for the benefit of that preshous colledge bring me word you'll come to-morrow at skool for we want to arange our plans yours old fellow

'P GLENN'

Master P. Glenn was concluding his note when

his father passed through the room, and took a glance over the boy's shoulder. He (Mr. Glenn) was a surgeon; one of the chief attached to the Helstonleigh infirmary, and in an excellent practice. 'At your exercise, Philip?'

'No, papa. I am writing a note to one of our fellows. I want him to be of our fishing party on Wednesday.'

'Wednesday! Have you a holiday on Wednesday?'

'Yes. Don't you know it will be a saint's day?'

'Not I,' said Mr. Glenn. 'Saints' days don't concern me, as they do you college boys. That's a pretty specimen of English!' he added, running his amused eyes over Philip's note.

'Are there any mistakes in it?' returned Philip. 'But it's no matter, papa. We don't profess to write English in the college school.'

'It is well you don't profess it,' remarked Mr. Glenn. 'But how is it your friend Halliburton can turn out good English?' He had taken up Frank's letter.

'Oh! they are such chaps for learning, the two Halliburtons. They stick at it like a horse-leech—never getting the cane for turned lessons. They hold school at home in the evenings for English and history, and such stuff that they don't get at the college.'

'Have they a tutor?'

They are not rich enough to pay a tutor. Mrs.

Halliburton's the tutor. What do you think Gar Halliburton did the other day? Keating was having a row with the fourth desk, and he gave them some extra verses to do. Up goes Gar Halliburton, before he had been a minute at his seat. "If you please, sir," says he to Keating, "I had better have another piece." "Why so?" asks Keating. "Because," says Gar, "I did these same verses with my brother at home a week ago." He meant his eldest brother; not Frank. But, now, was not that honourable, papa?'

'Yes, it was,' answered Mr. Glenn.

'That's just the Halliburtons all over. They are ultra-honourable.'

'I should like to see your friend Frank, and inquire how he manages to pick up his good English.'

'Let me bring him to tea to-morrow night?' cried Philip, eagerly.

'You may, if you like.'

'Hurrah!' shouted Philip. 'And you'll persuade him not to mind his mother, but to come to our fishing party?'

'Philip!'

'Well, papa, I don't mean that, exactly. But I do not see the use of boys listening to their mothers just in everything.'

Philip Glenn seized his note, and added a postscript:—'My father sais you are to come to tea to-morrow we shall be so joly.' And it was despatched to Frank by a servant in livery.

CHAPTER XII.

A LESSON FOR PHILIP GLENN.

FRANK was as eager to accept the invitation as Philip had been to offer it. When the afternoon arrived, and school was over, Frank tore home, donned his best clothes, and then tore back again to Mr. Glenn's house. Philip received him in the small room, where he and his brother prepared their lessons.

'How is it that you and my boys write English so differently?' inquired Mr. Glenn, when he had made acquaintance with Frank.

Frank broke into a broad smile, suggested by the remembrance of Philip's English. 'We study it at home, sir.'

'But some one teaches you?'

'Mamma. She was afraid that we should grow up ignorant of everything except Latin and Greek; so she thought she would remedy it.'

'And she takes you in an evening?'

'Yes, sir, every evening except Saturday, when she is sure to be busy. She comes to the table as

soon as our school lessons are prepared, and we commence English. The more easy portions of our Latin and Greek we get done in the day, I and Gar: we crib the time from play hours; and my brother William helps us at night with the difficult parts.'

'Where is your brother at school?' asked Mr. Glenn.

'He is not at school, sir. He is at Mr. Ashley's, with Cyril Dare. William has not been to school since papa died. But he was well advanced in everything, for papa had taken great pains with him, and he has gone on by himself since.'

'Can he do much good by himself?'

'Good!' echoed Frank, speaking bluntly, in his eagerness; 'I don't think you could find so good a scholar for his age. There's not one could come near him in the college school. At first he found it hard work. He had no one to explain difficult points for him, and was obliged to puzzle them out with his own brains. And it's that which has got him on.'

Mr. Glenn nodded. 'Where the foundation has been well laid, the principles learnt, and the pronunciation of the Greek and Latin secured, a diligent boy may get on better without a master than with one, provided——'

'That is just what William says,' interrupted Frank, his dark eyes sparkling with animation. 'He would have given anything at one time to be

in the college school with us; but he does not care about it now.'

'Provided his heart is in his work, I was about to add,' said Mr. Glenn, smiling at Frank's eagerness.

'Oh, of course, sir. And that's what William's is. He has such capital books, too—all the best that are published. They were papa's. I hardly know how I and Gar should get on, but for William's helping us.'

'Does he help you?'

'He has helped us all along since papa died; before we went to the college, and since. We do Algebra and Euclid with him.'

'In—deed!' exclaimed Mr. Glenn, looking hard at Frank. 'When do you contrive to do all this?'

'In the evening. Our tea is over by half-past five, and we three—William, I, and Gar—get at once to our lessons. In about two hours mamma joins us, and we work with her about two hours more. Of course we have different nights for different studies. Latin every night, Greek nearly every night, Euclid twice a week, Algebra twice a-week, and so on. And the lessons we do with mamma are portioned out; some one night, some another.'

'You must be very persevering boys,' cried Mr. Glenn. 'Do you never catch yourselves looking off to play; to talk and laugh?'

'No, sir, never. We have learnt the habit of being steady at our lessons; mamma has got us into it. And then, we are anxious to get on; half the battle lies in that.'

'I think it does. Philip, my boy, here's a lesson for you, and for all other lazy scapegraces.'

Philip shrugged his shoulders, with a laugh. 'Papa, I don't see any good in working so hard.'

'Your friend Frank does.'

'We are obliged to work, sir,' said candid Frank. 'We have no money, and it is only through our education that we can hope to get on. Mamma thinks it may turn out all for the best. She says that boys who expect money are apt to rely upon the money and not upon themselves. She would rather turn us out in the world with our talents cultivated and a will to exert them, than with a fortune apiece. There's not a parable in the Bible mamma is fonder of reading to us than that of the ten talents.'

'No fortune!' repeated Mr. Glenn, in a dreamy tone.

'Not a penny; mamma has to work to keep us,' returned Frank, making the avowal as freely as though he had been proclaiming that his mother was lady-in-waiting to the Queen, and himself one of her state pages. Jane had contrived to convince them that in poverty itself there lay no stigma; but a great deal in paltry attempts to conceal it.

'Frank,' said Mr. Glenn, 'I was thinking that you must possess a fortune in your mother.'

'And so we do!' said Frank. 'When Philip's note came to me last night, and we were—were——'

'Laughing over it!' suggested Mr. Glenn, helping out Frank's hesitation, and laughing himself.

'Yes, that's it; only I did not like to say it,' acknowledged Frank. 'But I dare say you know, sir, how most of the college boys write. Mamma said then how glad we ought to be that she can make the time to teach us better, and that we have ourselves the resolution to persevere.'

'I wish your mamma would admit my sons to her class,' said Mr. Glenn, half seriously, half-jokingly. 'I would give her any recompense.'

'Shall I ask her?' cried Frank.

'Perhaps she would feel hurt?'

'Oh, no, she'd not,' answered Frank, impulsively. 'I will ask her.'

'I should not like such a strict mother,' avowed Philip Glenn.

'Strict!' echoed Frank. 'Mamma's not strict.'

'She is. She says you shan't come fishing with us to-morrow.'

'No, she did not. She said she wished me not to go, and thought I had better not, and then she left it to me.'

Philip Glenn stared. 'You told me at school this morning that it was decided you were not to

come. And now you say Mrs. Halliburton left it to you.'

'So she did,' answered Frank. 'She generally leaves these things to us. She shows us what we ought to do, and why it is right that we should do it, and then she leaves it to what she calls our own good sense. It is like putting us upon our honour.'

'And you do as you know she wishes you should do?' interposed Mr. Glenn.

'Yes, sir, always.'

'Suppose you were to take your own will for once against hers?' cried Philip, in a cross tone. 'What then?'

'Then I dare say she would decide herself the next time, and tell us we were not to be trusted. But there's no fear of us. We know her wishes are sure to be the right ones; and we would not vex her for the world. The last time the dean was here there was a fuss about the choristers getting holiday so often; and he forbade its being done.'

'But the dean's away,' impatiently interrupted Philip Glenn. 'Old Ripton is in residence, and he would give it you for the asking. He knows nothing about the dean's order.'

'That's the reason,' returned Frank. 'Mamma put it to me whether it would be an honourable thing to do. She said if Dr. Ripton had been privy to the dean's order, then I might have

asked him, and he could do as he pleased. She makes us wish to do what is right—not only what appears so.'

'And you'll punish yourself, by going without the holiday, for some rubbishing cock-aloft notion of "doing right!" It's just nonsense, Frank Halliburton.'

'Of course we have to punish ourselves sometimes,' acknowledged Frank. 'I shall be wishing all day long to-morrow that I was with you. But when evening comes, and the day's over, then I shall be glad to have done right. Mamma says if we do not learn to act rightly and self-reliantly as boys, we shall not do so as men.'

Mr. Glenn laid his hand on Frank's shoulder. 'Inculcate your creed upon my sons, if you can,' said he, speaking seriously. 'Has your mother taught it to you long?'

'She has always been teaching it to us; ever since we were little,' rejoined Frank. 'If we had to begin now, I don't know that we should make much of it.'

Mr. Glenn fell into a reverie. As Mr. Ashley had once judged by some words dropped by William, so Mr. Glenn was judging now—that Mrs. Halliburton must be a mother in a thousand. Frank turned to Philip.

'Have you done your lessons?'

'Done my lessons! No. Have you?'

Frank laughed. 'Yes, or I should not have

come. I have not played a minute to-day—but cribbed the time. Scanning, and exercise, and Greek; I have done them all.'

'It seems to me that you and your brothers make friends of your lessons, while most boys make enemies,' observed Mr. Glenn.

'Yes, that's true,' said Frank.

'Philip,' said Mr. Glenn to his son that evening after Frank had departed, 'I give you *carte blanche* to bring that boy here as much as you like. If you are wise, you will make a lasting friend of him.'

'I like the Halliburtons,' replied Philip. 'The college school doesn't, though.'

'And pray, why?

'Well, I think Dare senior first set the school against them—that's Cyril, you know, papa. He was always going on at them. They were snobs for sticking to their lessons, he said, which gentlemen never did; and they were snobs because they had no money to spend, which gentlemen always had; and they were snobs for this, and snobs for the other; and he got his desk, which ruled the school, to cut them. They had to put up with a good deal then, but they are bigger now, and can fight their way; and, since Dare senior left, the school has begun to like them. If they are poor, they can't help it,' concluded Philip, in a tone as if he would apologise for the fact.'

'Poor!' retorted Mr. Glenn. 'I can tell you, Master Philip, and the college school too, that they are rich in things that you lack. Unless I am deceived, the Halliburtons will grow up to be men of no common order.'

CHAPTER XIII.

GETTING ON BETTER.

TRIFLES, as we all know, lead to great events. When Frank Halliburton had gone home, in his usual flying, eager manner, plunging headlong into the subject of Mr. Glenn's request, and Jane consented to grant it, she little thought that it would lead to a very considerable augmentation of her income, enabling them to procure several comforts, and rendering better private instruction than her own, easy for her sons.

Not that she acceded to the request off-hand. She took time for consideration. But Frank was urgent; and she was one of those ever ready to do a good turn for others. The Glenns, as Frank said, did write English wretchedly; and if she could help them to improvement, without cost to herself of time or money, neither of which she could afford, why not do so? And she consented.

It certainly did occur to Mrs. Halliburton to wonder that Mr. Glenn had not provided private instruction for his sons, to remedy the deficiencies existing in the college school system. Mr. Glenn

suddenly awoke to the same wonder himself. The fact was, that he, like many other gentlemen in Helstonleigh, who had sons in the college school, had been supinely content to let things take their chance: possibly, he assumed that spelling and composition would come to his sons by intuition, as they grew older. The contrast Frank Halliburton presented to Philip aroused him from his neglect.

Jane consented to let the two young Glenns come to share in the time and instruction she gave to her own boys. Mr. Glenn received the favour gladly; but, at first, there was considerable battling with the young gentlemen themselves. They could not be got to complete their lessons for school, so as to be at Mrs. Halliburton's by the hour appointed. At length it was accomplished, and they took to go regularly.

Before three months had elapsed, great improvement had become visible in their spelling. They were likewise acquiring a fair insight into English grammar; had learnt that America was not situated in the Mediterranean, or bordered by the Nile; and that English history did not solely consist of two incidents—the beheading of King Charles, and Guy Faux's gunpowder plot. Improvement was also visible in their manners, and in the bent of their minds. From being boisterous, self-willed, and careless, they became more considerate, more tractable; and Mr. Glenn actually

once heard Philip decline to embark in some tempting scrape, because it would 'not be right.'

For it was impossible for Jane to have lads near her, and not gently try to counteract their faults and failings, as she would have done by her own sons; while the remarkable consideration and deference paid by the young Halliburtons to their mother, their warm affection for her, and the pleasant peace, the refinement of tone and manner pervading their home, told upon Philip and Charles Glenn with a good influence. At the end of three months, Mr. Glenn wrote a note of cordial thanks to Mrs. Halliburton, expressing a hope that she would still allow his sons the privilege of joining her own, and, in a delicate manner, begging grace for his act, inclosed four guineas; which was at the rate of sixteen guineas yearly for the two.

Jane had not expected it. Nothing had been hinted to her about payment, and she did not look to receive any: she did not understand that the boys had joined on those terms. It was very welcome. In writing back to Mr. Glenn, she stated that she had not expected to receive remuneration; but she spoke of her straitened circumstances, and thanked him for the help it would be.

'That comes from a gentlewoman,' was his remark to his wife, when he read the note. 'I should like to know her.'

'I hinted as much to Frank one day, but he

said his mother was too much occupied to receive visits or pay them,' was the reply of Mrs. Glenn.

As it happened, however, Mr. Glenn did pay her a visit. A friend of his, whose boys were in the college school, struck with the improvement visible in the Glenns, and hearing of its source, wondered whether his boys might not be received on the same terms, and Mr. Glenn undertook to propose it. The result of all this was, that in six months from the time of that afternoon when Frank first took tea at Mr. Glenn's, Jane had ten evening pupils, college boys. There she stopped. Others applied, but her table would not hold more, nor could she do a greater number justice. The ten would bring her in eighty guineas yearly, she devoting to them two hours, five evenings in the week.

Now, she could command somewhat better food, and more liberal instruction for her own boys, William included, in those higher branches of knowledge which they could not, or had not, commenced for themselves. A learned professor, David Byrne, whose lodgings were in the London Road, was applied to, and he agreed to receive the young Halliburtons at a very moderate charge, three evenings in the week.

'Mamma,' cried William, one day, with his thoughtful smile, soon after this agreement was entered upon, 'we seem to be getting on amaz-

ingly. We can learn something else now, if you have no objection.'

'What is that?' asked Jane.

'French. As I and Samuel Lynn were walking home to-day, we met Monsieur Colin. He said he was about to organise a French class, twelve in number, and would be glad if we would make three. What do you say?'

'It is a great temptation,' answered Jane. 'I have been wishing you to learn French. Would it be very dear?'

'Very cheap to us. He said he considered you a sister professor——'

'The idea!' burst forth Frank, hotly. 'Mamma a professor!'

'Indeed, I don't know that I can aspire to be called anything so formidable,' said Jane, with a laugh. 'A schoolmistress would be more suitable.'

Frank was indignant. 'You are not a schoolmistress, mamma. I——'

'Frank,' interrupted Jane, her tone changing to seriousness.

'What, mamma?'

'I am *thankful* to be one.'

The tears rose to Frank's eyes. 'You are a *lady*, mamma. I shall never think you anything else. There!'

Jane smiled. 'Well, I hope I am, Frank; although I help to make gloves, and teach boys good English.'

'How well Mr. Lynn speaks French!' exclaimed William.

'Does he speak it?'

'Like a native. I cannot tell what his accent may be, but he speaks it as readily as Monsieur Colin. Shall we learn, mamma? It will be the greatest advantage to us, Monsieur Colin conversing with us in French.'

'But what about the time, William?'

'Oh, if you will manage the money, we will manage the time,' returned William, laughing. 'Only trust to us, mother. We will make it, and neglect nothing.'

'Then, William, you may tell Monsieur Colin that you shall learn.'

'Fair and easy!' broke out Frank; a saying of his when pleased. 'Mamma, I think, what with one thing and another turning up, we boys shall be getting a pretty considerable first-class education.'

'Although mamma feared we never should accomplish it,' returned William. 'As did I.'

'Fear!' cried Frank. '*I* didn't. I knew that "where there's a will there's a way." *Degeneres animos timor arguit*,' added he, finishing off with one of his favourite Latin quotations; but forgetting, in his flourish, that he was paying a poor compliment to his mother and his brother.

CHAPTER XIV.

WILLIAM HALLIBURTON'S GHOST.

This chapter may be said to commence the second part of this history, for some years have elapsed since the events last recorded.

Do you doubt that the self-denying patience displayed by Jane Halliburton, her persevering struggles, her never-fainting industry, joined to her all-perfect trust in the goodness and guidance of the Most High God, could fail to bring their reward? It is not possible. But do not fancy it has come suddenly in the shape of a coach-and-six. Rewards, worth having, are not acquired so easily. Have you met with the following lines? They are somewhat applicable.

'How rarely, friend, a good, great man inherits
Honour and wealth, with all his worth and pains!
It seems a fable from the land of spirits
When any man obtains that which he merits,
Or any merits that which he obtains.
For shame, my friend! renounce this idle strain:
What would'st thou have the good, great man obtain—
Wealth? title? dignity? a golden chain?

Or heaps of corpses which his sword hath slain ?
Goodness and greatness are not means, but ends.
Hath he not always treasures, always friends,
The good, great man ? Three treasures—
Love ; and life ; and calm thoughts, equable as infant's
breath :
And three fast friends, more sure than day or night,
Himself; his Maker ; and the angel, Death.'

Jane's reward was in progress : it had not fully come. At present it was little more than that of an approving conscience for having fought her way through difficulties in the patient continuance of well-doing, and in the fulfilment, in a remarkable manner, of the subject she had had most at heart —that of giving her sons an education that would fit them to play any part they might be called upon to play in the destinies of life—in watching them grow up full of the promise to make good and great men.

In circumstances, Jane was tolerably at ease now. Time had wrought its changes. Mrs. Reece had gone—not into other lodgings, but to join Janey Halliburton on the long journey. And Dobbs—Dobbs !—was servant to Mrs. Halliburton ! Dobbs had experienced misfortune. Dobbs had put by a good round sum in a bank, for Dobbs had been provident all her life ; and the bank broke, and swallowed up Dobbs's savings ; and nearly all Dobbs's surly independence went out with it. Misfortunes do not come alone ; it is an admitted axiom ; and Mrs. Reece died almost im-

mediately after Dobbs's treacherous bank went. The old lady's will had been good to leave Dobbs something, but she had not the power: the income she had enjoyed went, at her death, to her late husband's relatives. She had made Dobbs handsome presents from time to time, which Dobbs had placed with the rest of her accumulated money. It had all gone.

Poor Dobbs, good for nothing in the first shock of the loss, paid Mrs. Halliburton for a bedroom weekly, and sat herself down to fret. Next, she tried to get a living at making gloves—an employment Dobbs had followed in her early days. But, what with not being so young as she was, neither her eyes nor her fingers, Dobbs found she could make nothing of the work. She went about the house doing odd jobs for Mrs. Halliburton, until that lady ventured on a proposal (with as much deference as though she had been making it to an Indian Begum), that Dobbs should remain with her as her servant. An experienced, thoroughly good servant she required now; and that she knew Dobbs to be. Dobbs acquiesced; and forthwith went up-stairs, moved her things into the dark closet, and obstinately adopted it for her own bedroom.

The death of Mrs. Reece had enabled Jane to put in practice a plan she had long thought of—the receiving boarders into her house, after the manner of the dames at Eton. Some of the foun-

dation boys in the college school lived at a distance, and it was a great matter with the parents to place them in families where they would find a desirable home. The wife of the head master, Mrs. Keating, accommodated half-a-dozen; Jane thought she might do the same. She had been solicited to do so; but had not room while Mrs. Reece was with her. She still held her class in the evening. As one set of boys finished with her, others were only too glad to take their places: there was no teaching like Mrs. Halliburton's. Upon making it known that she could receive boarders, applications poured in; and six, all she had convenient accommodation for, came. They, of course, attended the college school in the day. Thus she could afford to relinquish the working at the gloves; and did so, to Samuel Lynn's chagrin: a steady, regular worker, as Jane had been, was valuable to the manufactory. Altogether, what with her evening class, and the sum paid by the boarders, her income was between two and three hundred a year, not counting what was earned by William.

William had progressed at Mr. Ashley's, and now earned thirty shillings per week. Frank and Gar had not left the college school. Frank's time was out, and more than out; but when a scholar got on in the superior manner that Frank Halliburton had, the Rev. Mr. Keating was not in a hurry to intimate to him that his time had ex-

pired. So Frank remained on, studying hard, one of the most finished scholars that Helstonleigh Collegiate School had ever turned out.

There sat one great desire at Frank's heart; it had almost grown into a passion; it coloured his dreams by night and his thoughts by day—that of matriculating at one of the two Universities. The random and somewhat dim idea of Frank's early days—the studying for the bar—had become the fixed purpose of his life. That he was gifted, in an eminent degree, with the tastes and qualifications necessary to make a good pleader, there could be no doubt; therefore, Frank had probably not mistaken his vocation. Persevering in study, keen in perceptive intellect, equable in temper, fluent and persuasive in speech, a fit type was he of an embryo barrister. He did not quite see his way clear yet to get to college. Neither did Gar; and Gar had set *his* mind upon the Church.

One cold January evening, bright, clear, and frosty, Samuel Lynn stopped away from the manufactory. He had received a letter by the evening post to say that a friend, on his way from Birmingham to Bristol, would halt for a few hours at his house, and go on by the Bristol mail, which passed through the city at eleven o'clock. The gentleman arrived punctually, was regaled with tea and other good things in the state parlour, and he and Samuel Lynn set themselves to

enjoy a pleasant evening together, Patience and Anna forming part of the company; Anna's luxuriant curls and her wondrous beauty—for, in growing up, that beauty had not belied the promise of her childhood—being shaded under the demure Quaker's cap. Something else had not belied the promise of her childhood, and that was her vanity.

Apparently, she did not find the evening or the visitor to her taste. He was old, like her father and Patience: everybody above thirty, Anna was apt to class as 'old.' She fidgeted on her seat, was restless, and, just as the clock struck seven—as if the sound rendered her sitting any longer unbearable—she rose up, and was quietly stealing from the room.

'Where are thee going, Anna?' asked her father?

Anna coloured, as if taken by surprise. 'Friend Jane Halliburton promised to lend me a book, father. I'd like to fetch it.'

'Sit thee still, child; thee dost not want to read to-night when Friend Stanley is with us. Show him thy drawings. Meanwhile, I will get the chess. Thee'd like a game?' turning to his visitor.

'Ay, I should,' was the ready answer. 'Remember, Friend Lynn, I beat thee last time.'

'Maybe my skill will redeem itself to-night,' nodded the Quaker, as he rose to get the chessmen. 'It shall try its best.'

'Would thee like a candle?' asked Patience, who was busy sewing.

'Not at all. My chamber is as light as day, with the moon shining in.'

Mr. Lynn went up to his chamber. The chess-board, and box containing the men, were kept on a table near the window. As he took them from it, he glanced out at the pleasant scene. His window faced the back, and the charming landscape, with the Malvern hills in the horizon, shone out almost as distinctly as in the day. Not, however, on the landscape were Samuel Lynn's eyes fixed; they had caught something nearer, which drew his attention.

Pacing the field-path, which ran along behind his low garden hedge, was a male figure in a cloak. To see a man, whether in a cloak or without it, abroad on a moonlight night would have been nothing extraordinary; but Samuel Lynn's notice was drawn by this one's movements. Beyond the immediate length of space occupied by the house, the field-path was hidden: on the one side, by the high hedge intervening between his garden and Mrs. Halliburton's; on the other, by a commencing wall. The figure—whoever it might be—would come to one of these corners, stealthily peep at Samuel Lynn's house and windows, and then continue his way past it, till he got to the other corner, where he would halt and peep again, partially hiding himself beyond the hedge. That

he was waiting for something or some one was apparent, for he stamped his feet occasionally in an impatient manner.

'What can it be that he does there?' cried the Quaker, half aloud. 'This is the second time I have seen him. He cannot be taking a sketch of my house by moonlight! Were it any other than thee, William Halliburton, I should say it wore a clandestine look.'

He returned to the parlour, and took his revenge on his friend by checkmating him three times running. At nine o'clock supper came in; and at ten Mr. Stanley, accompanied by Samuel Lynn, left, to walk leisurely into Helstonleigh, and await the Bristol mail. As they turned out of the house, they saw William Halliburton going in at his own door.

'It is a cold night,' William remarked to Mr. Lynn.

'Very. Good night to thee.'

You can't see what he is like by this light, especially in that disguising cloak, and the cap with its pendent ears. But you can see him the following morning, as he stands in Mr. Ashley's counting-house.

A well-grown, upright, noble form, a head taller than Samuel Lynn, by whose side he is standing, with a peculiarly attractive face. Not for its beauty—the face cannot boast of much—but for its broad brow of intellect, its firm, sweet mouth,

and its earnestly truthful, dark-grey eyes. None could mistake William Halliburton for aught but a gentleman, although they had seen him, as now, with a white apron tied on round his waist. William was making up gloves, which term, as you may remember, means sorting them according to their qualities—a work which was sometimes done in Mr. Ashley's room, on account of its superior and steady light, for it bore a north aspect. A table, or counter, was fixed all along one side, underneath its windows. Mr. Lynn stood by his side, looking on.

'Thee can do it tolerably well, William,' he observed, after some minutes' close inspection.

William smiled. The Quaker never accorded decided praise, and never thought anybody could be trusted in the making-up department, himself and James Meeking excepted. William had been exercised in the making-up for the past eighteen months, and he thought he ought to do it pretty well by this time. Mr. Lynn was turning away, when his keen sight fell on several dozens at a little distance. He took up one of the top pairs with a hasty movement, knitted his brow, and then took up others.

'Thee has not exercised thy judgment or thy caution here, friend William.'

'I did not make up those,' replied William.

'Who did, then?'

'Cyril Dare.'

'I have told Cyril Dare he is not to attempt the making up,' returned Samuel Lynn, in a severe tone. 'When did he do these?'

'Yesterday afternoon.'

'There, again! He knows the gloves are not made up in a winter's afternoon. I myself would not do it by so obscure a light. Thee go over these thyself when thee has finished the stack before thee.'

Samuel Lynn was not one who spared work. He mixed the offending dozens together indiscriminately, and pushed them near William. Then he turned back to his own place, and went on with his work: he was also making up. Presently he spoke again.

'What does thee do at the back of my house of a night? Thee must find the promenade cold.'

William turned his head with a movement of surprise. 'I don't do anything at the back of your house. What do you mean?'

'Not walk about there, watching it, as thee did last night?'

'Certainly not! I do not understand what you mean.'

Samuel Lynn's brows knit heavily. 'William, I deemed thee truthful. Why deny what is a palpable fact?'

William Halliburton put down the pair of gloves he had in his hand, and turned to the Quaker. 'In saying that I do not walk at the back of your

house at night, or at the back of any house, I state the truth.'

'Last night, at seven o'clock, I saw thee parading there in thy cloak. I *saw* thee, I say, William. The night was unusually light.'

'Last night, from tea-time till half-past nine, I never stirred out of my mother's parlour,' rejoined William. 'I was at my books, as usual. At half-past nine I ran up to say a word to Henry Ashley. You saw me returning.'

'But I saw thee at the back with my own eyes,' persisted the Quaker. 'I saw thy cloak. Thee had on that blue cap of thine: it was tied down over thy ears; and the collar of the cloak was turned up, to protect thee, as I surmised, from the cold.'

'It must have been my ghost,' responded William. '*Should* I be likely to pace up and down a cold field, for pastime, on a January night?'

'Will thee oblige me by putting on thy cloak?' was all the answer returned by Samuel Lynn.

'What—now?'

'Please.'

William, laughing, went out of the room, and came back in his cloak. It was an old-fashioned cloak—a remarkable cloak—a dark plaid, its collar lined with red. Formerly worn by gentlemen, they had now become nearly obsolete; but William had picked this up cheap. He did not

care much for fashion, and it was warm and comfortable in the winter weather.

'Perhaps you wish me to put on my cap?' said William, in a serio-comic tone.

'Yes; and turn down the ears.'

He obeyed, very much amused. 'Anything more?' asked he.

'Walk thyself about an instant.'

His lips smiling, his eyes dancing, William marched from one side of the room to the other. While this was in process Cyril Dare bustled in, and stood in amazement, staring at William. The Quaker paid no heed to his arrival, except that he took out his watch and glanced at it. He continued to address William.

'And thee can assure me, to my face, that thee was not pacing the field last night in the moonlight, dressed as now?'

'I can, and do,' replied William.

'Then, William, it is one of two things. My eyes or thy word must be false.'

'Did you see my face?' asked William.

'Not much of that. With the ears of the cap down, and the collar of the cloak up, thy face was pretty effectually concealed. There's not another cloak like thine in all Helstonleigh.'

'You are right there,' laughed William; 'there's not one half so handsome. Admire the contrast of the purple and green plaid and the scarlet collar.'

'No, not another like it,' emphatically repeated the Quaker. 'I tell thee, William Halliburton, in the teeth of thy denial, that I saw thee, or a figure precisely similar to thee, parading the field-path last night, and stealthily watching my windows.'

'It's a clear case of ghost,' returned William, with an amused look at Cyril Dare. 'How much longer am I to make a walking Guy of myself, for your pleasure and Cyril's astonishment?'

'Thee can take it off,' replied the Quaker, his short tone betraying his dissatisfaction. Until that moment he had believed William Halliburton to be the very quintessence of truth. His belief was shaken now.

In the small passage between Mr. Ashley's room and Samuel Lynn's, William hung up the cloak and cap. The Quaker turned to Cyril Dare, who was taking off his greatcoat, stern displeasure in his tone.

'Dost thee know the time?'

'Just gone half-past nine,' replied Cyril.

Mr. Lynn held out his watch to Cyril. It wanted seventeen minutes to ten. 'Nine o'clock is thy hour. I am tired of telling thee to be more punctual. And thee did not come before breakfast.'

'I overslept myself,' said Cyril.

'As thee dost pretty often, it seems. If thee can do no better than thee did yesterday, as well oversleep thyself for good. Look at these gloves.'

'Well!' cried Cyril, who was a good-looking young man, not far short in stature of the height of William. At least he would have been good-looking, but for his eyes; there was a cross look in them, not amounting to a squint; and they did not gaze openly and honestly into another's eyes, but were apt to fall. His face was thin, and his features were well-formed. 'Well!' cried he.

'It is well,' repeated the Quaker; 'well that I looked at them, for they must be done again. Firsts are mixed with seconds, thirds with firsts; I do not know that I ever saw gloves so ill made up. What have I told thee?'

'Lots of things,' responded Cyril, who liked to set the manager at defiance, so far as he dared.

'I have desired thee never to attempt to make up the gloves. I now forbid thee again; and thee will do well not to forget it. Begin and band these gloves that William Halliburton is making ready.'

Cyril jerked open the drawer where the paper bands were kept, took some out of it, and carried them to the counter, where William stood. Mr. Lynn interposed with another order.

'Thee will please put thy apron on.'

Now, the having to wear this apron was the very bugbear of Cyril Dare's life. 'There's no need of an apron to paper gloves,' he responded.

'Thee will put on thy apron, friend,' calmly repeated Samuel Lynn.

'I hate the apron,' fumed Cyril, jerking open another drawer, and jerking out his apron; for he might not openly disobey the authority, vested in Samuel Lynn. 'I should think I am the first gentleman that ever was made to wear one.'

'If thee are practically engaged in a glove manufactory, thee must wear an apron, gentleman or no gentleman,' equably returned the Quaker. 'As we all do.'

'All don't!' retorted Cyril. 'The master does not.'

'Thee are not in the master's position yet, Cyril Dare. And I would advise thee to exercise thy discretion more, and thy tongue less.'

The discussion was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Ashley, and the room dropped into silence. There might be no presuming in the presence of the master. He sat down to his desk, and opened his morning letters. Presently a young man put his head in, and addressed Samuel Lynn.

'Noaks, the stainer, have come in, sir. He says them skins, gived out to him yesterday, would be better for coloured nor blacks.'

'Desire James Meeking to attend to him,' said Mr. Lynn.

'James Meeking ain't here, sir. He be up in the cutters'-room, or somewhere.'

Samuel Lynn, upon this, went out himself. Cyril Dare followed him. Cyril was rather fond of taking short trips about the manufactory, as inter-

ludes to his work. Soon after, the master lifted his head.

'Step here, William.'

William put down the pair of gloves he was examining, and approached the desk. 'What sort of a French scholar are you?' inquired Mr. Ashley.

'A very good one, sir,' he replied, after a pause given to surprise. 'I know it thoroughly well. I can read and write it as readily as I can English.'

'But I meant as to speaking. Could you make yourself understood, for instance, if a balloon suddenly dropped you down in a French town, where the natives spoke nothing but their own language?'

William smiled. 'I don't think I should have much difficulty over it. I have been so much with Monsieur Colin, that I talk as fast as he does. He stops me occasionally to grumble at what he calls *l'accent des Anglais.*'

'I am not sure but I shall send you on a mission to France,' resumed Mr. Ashley. 'You can be better spared than Samuel Lynn; and it must be one of you. Will you undertake it?'

'I will undertake anything that you wish me to do, sir, that I am competent for,' replied William, lifting his clear, ever-to-be-trusted eyes to those of his master.

'You are an exceedingly good judge of skins: which Samuel Lynn admits. I want some intelligent, trustworthy person to go over to France,

look about the markets there, and pick up what will suit us. The demand for skins is great at the present time, and the markets must be watched to pick out suitable bales, before other bidders step in, and pounce upon them. By these means we may secure some good bargains and good skins: we have succeeded lately in doing neither.'

'At Annonay, I presume you mean, sir?'

'Annonay and its neighbourhood; that's the chief market for dressed skins. The undressed ones, pelts, are to be met with best, as you are aware, in the neighbourhood of Lyons. You would have to look after both. I have talked the matter over with Mr. Lynn, and he thinks you may be trusted, both as to competency and conduct.'

'I will do my best, if I am sent,' replied William.

'Your stay might extend to two or three months. We can do with plenty; both of pelts and dressed skins. The dressers at Annonay—— Cyril, what are you doing there?'

Cyril could scarcely have told, himself. He had come into the counting-house unnoticed, and his ears had picked up somewhat of the conversation. In his anger and annoyance, Cyril had stopped still, his face turned towards the speakers, listening for more.

For it had oozed out at Pomeranian Knoll, through a word dropped by Henry Ashley, that Mr. Ashley had it in contemplation to despatch

somebody from the manufactory on this mission to France, and that the somebody would not be Samuel Lynn. Cyril took the information in with the most complaisant avidity, never doubting that *he* would be the one fixed upon. To give him his due, he was really a good judge of skins—not better than William was; but somehow Cyril had never given a thought to William in the matter. Greatly had he anticipated the journey to the land of pleasure, where he would be under nobody's control but his own. In that moment, when he heard Mr. Ashley speak to William upon the subject, not to him, Cyril felt at war with everybody and everything; with the master, with William, and especially with the business, which he hated as much as he had ever done.

But Mr. Ashley was not one to do things in a hurry, and this was only the broaching of the subject.

CHAPTER XV.

'NOTHING RISK, NOTHING WIN.'

It was Saturday night, the Saturday subsequent to the above conversation, and Mr. Lynn was making ready to pay the men. James Meeking was payer in a general way; but James Meeking was also the packer; that is, he packed, with assistance, the goods destined for London. A parcel was being sent off this evening, so it fell to Mr. Lynn's lot to pay the workmen. He stood before the desk in the serving-room, counting out his money in readiness. There was a heap of silver in a bag, and a great many brown paper packets of halfpence; each packet containing five shillings. But they all had to be counted, for sometimes a packet would run a penny or twopence short.

The door at the foot of the stairs was heard to open, and a man's step came up. It proved to be a workman from a neighbouring manufactory.

'If you please, Mr. Lynn, could you oblige our people with twelve or fourteen pounds' worth of change?' he asked. 'We couldn't get in enough

change to-day, try as we would. The halfpence seems as scarce as the silver.'

Now it happened that the Ashley manufactory was that evening abundantly supplied. Samuel Lynn went into the counting-house to the master, who was seated at the desk. 'The Dunns have sent in to know if we can oblige them with twelve or fourteen pounds' worth of change,' said he. 'We have plenty to-night; but to send away so much may run us very short. Dost thee happen to have any gold that thee can spare?'

Mr. Ashley looked in his own cash drawer. 'Here are six, seven sovereigns.'

'That will be sufficient,' replied Samuel Lynn, taking them from his hand, and going back to the applicant in the serving-room. 'How much has thee need of?' asked he.

'Fourteen pounds, please, sir. I have got the cheque here, made out for it. Silver or copper, it don't matter which; or a little gold. I have brought a basket along of me.'

Mr. Lynn gave the money, and took the cheque. The man departed, and the Quaker carried the cheque to Mr. Ashley.

Mr. Ashley put the cheque in one of the pigeon-holes of his desk. He had the account in duplicate, of the goods going off, before him, and he was casting it up. William and Cyril were both in the counting-house, but not engaged with Mr. Ashley. William was marking small figures on certain

banded gloves; Cyril was looking on, which mode of employment suited Cyril amazingly. His unoccupation caught the Quaker's eye.

'If thee has nothing to do, thee can come and help me count the papers of coppers.'

Cyril dared not say 'No,' before Mr. Ashley. He might have hesitated to say it direct to Samuel Lynn; nevertheless, it was a work he especially disliked. It is *not* pleasant to soil the fingers, counting innumerable five-shilling-brown paper packets of copper money; to part them into stacks of twelve pence, or twenty-four halfpence. In point of fact, it was James Meeking's work; but there were times when Samuel Lynn, William, and Cyril had each to take his turn at it. Perhaps the two former liked it no better than did Cyril Dare.

Cyril ungraciously followed to the serving-room. In a few minutes James Meeking looked in at the counting-house. 'Is the master ready?'

Mr. Ashley rose, and went into the next room, carrying one of the duplicate lists. The men were waiting to pack—James Meeking and the other packer, a young man named Dance. The several papers of boxes were ready on a side counter; and Mr. Ashley stood with the list in his hand, ready to verify them. Had Samuel Lynn not been occupied with serving, he would have done this.

'Three dozen best men's outsizes, coloured,'

called out James Meeking, reading the marks on the first parcel he took up.

'Right,' responded Mr. Ashley.

James Meeking laid it upon the packing-table—clear, save for an enormous sheet of brown paper as thick as a board—turned to the side counter, and took up another of the parcels.

'Three dozen best men's outsizes, coloured,' repeated he.

'Right,' replied Mr. Ashley.

And so on, till all the parcels were told through, and were found to tally with the invoice. Then began the packing. It made a large parcel, about four feet square. Mr. Ashley remained, looking on.

'You will not have enough string there,' he observed, as the men were placing the string round it in squares.

'I telled ye we shouldn't, Meeking,' said George Dance.

'There's no more down-stairs,' was Meeking's answer. 'I thought it might be enough.'

Neither of the men could leave the cumbersome parcel. They were mounted on steps on either side it. Mr. Ashley called to William. 'Light the lantern, and go up-stairs to the string-closet. Bring down a ball.'

Unprotected candles were not allowed to be carried about the premises. William came forth, lighted the lantern, and went up-stairs. At the same moment, Cyril Dare, who had finished his

uncongenial copper counting, strolled into the counting-house. Finding it empty, he thought he could not do better than take a survey of the inside of Mr. Ashley's desk, the lid of which was propped open. He had no particular motive for doing this, save that that receptacle might present some food or other to gratify his curiosity, which the counters and the gloves on them could not be supposed to do. Amidst other fancy things, his eyes fell on the Messrs. Dunns' cheque, which lay in one of the pigeon-holes.

'It would set me up for a fortnight, that fourteen pounds!' ejaculated he. 'Nobody would find it out, either. Ashley would suspect anybody in the manufactory before he'd suspect *me!*'

He stood for a moment in indecision, his hand stretched out. Should it be drawn back, and the temptation resisted; or, should he yield to it? 'Here goes!' cried Cyril. 'Nothing risk, nothing win!'

He transferred the cheque to his own pocket, and stole out of the counting-house into the small narrow passage which intervened between it and Mr. Lynn's room, where the parcel was being made up. Passing through the room stealthily, at the back of the huge parcel, which hid him from the eyes of the men and of Mr. Ashley, he emerged in safety in the serving-room, took up his position close to Samuel Lynn, and began assiduously to count over some shilling stacks which he had

already counted. Samuel Lynn, his face turned to the crowd of surrounding men who were on the other side the serving-counter receiving their wages, had not noticed the absence of Cyril Dare. Upon this probable fact, Cyril had reckoned.

'Any more to count?' asked Cyril.

Samuel Lynn turned his head round. 'Not if thee has finished all the packets.' Had he seen what had just taken place, he might have intrusted packets of coppers to Mr. Cyril less confidently.

Cyril jumped upon the edge of the desk, and remained perched there, fully conspicuous. William Halliburton came back with the twine, which he handed to George Dance. Blowing out the lantern light, he returned to the counting-house.

The tying of the parcel was completed, and James Meeking directed it, in his plain, clerk-like hand—'Messrs. James Morrison, Dillon, and Co., Fore Street, London.' It was then conveyed to a truck in waiting, to be wheeled to the parcels' office. Mr. Ashley returned to his desk, and sat down to it. Presently, Cyril Dare came in.

'Halliburton, don't you want to be paid to-night? Everybody's paid but you. Mr. Lynn's waiting to shut the desk.'

'Here is a letter for the post, William,' called out Mr. Ashley.

'I am coming back, sir. I have not set the counter straight yet.'

He received his money—thirty shillings per

week now. He then put things straight in the counting-house, to do which was as much Cyril's work as his, and took a letter from the hands of Mr. Ashley. It contained one of the duplicate lists, and was addressed as the parcel had been. William generally had charge of the outward letters now; he did not forget them as he had done in his first unlucky essay. He threw on that elegant cloak, of which you have heard, took his hat, and went through the town, as far as the post-office, Cyril Dare walking with him. There they parted: Cyril continuing his way homewards; William retracing his road.

All had left the manufactory save Mr. Ashley and Samuel Lynn. James Meeking had gone down. On a late night, like the present, when all had done, save the master and Samuel Lynn, the latter would sometimes say to the foreman, 'Thee can go on to thy supper; I will lock up, and bring thee the keys.' Mr. Ashley was setting his desk to rights—putting some papers in their places; tearing up others. He unlocked his cash drawer, and put his other hand at the same time in the pigeon-hole for the cheque. It was not there. Neither there nor anywhere, that he could see.

'Why, where's that cheque?' he exclaimed.

It caused Samuel Lynn to turn. 'Cheque?' he repeated.

'Dunns' cheque, that you brought me an hour ago.'

'I saw thee put it in the second pigeon-hole,' said the Quaker, advancing to the desk, and standing by Mr. Ashley.

'I know I did. But it is gone.'

'Thee must have moved it. Perhaps it is in thy private drawer?'

Mr. Ashley shook his head: he was deep in consideration. 'I have not touched it since I put it there,' he presently said. "Unless—— surely I cannot have torn it up in mistake?'

He and Samuel Lynn both stopped over the waste paper basket. They could detect nothing of the sort amidst its contents. Mr. Ashley was at a nonplus. 'This is a curious thing, Samuel,' said he. 'No person was in the room, during my absence, but William Halliburton.'

'He would not meddle with thy desk,' observed the Quaker.

'No: nor suffer any one else to meddle with it. I should like to see William. He may possibly throw some light upon the subject. The cheque could not vanish.'

Samuel Lynn went down to James Meeking's, whom he disturbed at supper. He bade him watch at the entrance-gate for the return of William along the street from the post-office, and request him to walk into the manufactory. William was not very long in making his appearance. He received the message—that the master and Mr. Lynn wanted him in the manufactory—and in he went

with alacrity, having jumped to the conclusion that some conference was about to be held, touching the French journey.

Considerably surprised was he to learn what the matter really was. He quite laughed at the idea of the cheque's being gone, and believed that Mr. Ashley must have torn it up. Very minutely went he over the contents of the paper-basket. Its relics were not there.

'It's like magic!' exclaimed William. 'Nobody came into the counting-house, not even Mr. Lynn or Cyril Dare.'

'Cyril Dare was with me,' said the Quaker. 'Verily, it seems to savour of the marvellous.'

It certainly did; and no conclusion could be come to. Neither could anything be done that night.

It was late when William reached home—a quarter past ten. Frank was sitting over the fire, waiting for him. Gar had gone to bed tired; Mrs. Halliburton with headache; Dobbs, because there was nothing more to do.

'How late you are!' was Frank's salutation. 'Just because I am wanting to have a talk with you.'

'Upon the old theme,' said William, with a smile. 'Oxford or Cambridge?'

'I say, William, if you are going to throw cold water upon it —— But it won't put a damper upon me,' broke off Frank, gaily.

'I would rather throw hot water on it than cold, Frank.'

'Look here, William. I am growing up to be a man, and I can't bear the idea of living longer upon my mother. At my age I ought to be helping her. I am no nearer the University than I was years ago; and if I cannot get there, all my labour and my learning will be thrown away.'

'Not thrown away,' said William.

'Thrown away for my views. I must go to the Bar, or go to nothing—*aut Cæsar, aut nullus.* To the University I *will* get; and I see nothing for it, but going as a servitor. I shan't care a fig for the ridicule of those who get there by a golden road. There's Lacon going to Christchurch at Easter, a gentleman commoner; Parr goes to Cambridge, to old Trinity.'

'They are the sons of rich men.'

'I am not envying them. We have not faced out the difficulties of our position so long, and made the best of them, for me to begin envying others now. Wall's nephew, he goes up at Easter——'

'Oh, does he!' interrupted William. 'I thought he could not manage it.'

'Nor can he manage it in that sense. His father has too large a family to help him, and there's no chance of the exhibition. It is promised, Keating has announced The exhibitions in Helstonleigh College don't go by right.'

'Right, or merit, do you mean, Frank?'

'I suppose I meant merit; but the one implies the other. They go by neither.'

'Or you think that Frank Halliburton would have had it?'

'At any rate, he has not got it. Neither has Wall. Therefore, we have made up our minds, he and I, to go to Oxford as servitors.'

'All right! Success to you both!'

Frank fell into a reverie. The friend of whom he spoke, 'Wall,' was nephew of the under master of the college school. 'Of course, I never expected to get to college in any other way,' continued Frank, taking up the tongs, and balancing them on his fingers. 'If an exhibition did at odd moments cross my hopes, I did not dwell upon it. There are fellows in the school richer and greater than I. However, the exhibition is *gone*, and there's an end of it. The question now is—if I do go as a servitor, can my mother find the little additional expense necessary to keep me there?'

'Yes, I am sure she can: and will,' replied William.

'There'll be my clothes, and the expenses of travelling, and sundry other little things,' went on Frank. 'Wall says about fifteen pounds a-year, it will cost us each. We have dinner and supper free. Of course, I should never think of tea, and for breakfast I'd take milk and plain bread. And

there'd be the living at home between terms—unless I got something to do—and my clothes.'

'It can be managed. Frank, you'll drop those tongs.'

'What we shall have to do, as servitors, neither I nor Wall can precisely tell,' continued Frank, paying no heed to the warning. 'Wall says, brushing clothes, and setting tables for meals, and waiting on the other students at dinner, will be amongst the refreshing exercises. However it may be, my mind is made up *to do*. If they put me to black the college shoes, I shall only sing over it, and set on to my studies with a better will when the shoes shall have come to an end.'

William smiled. 'Blacking shoes will be no new employment to you, Frank.'

'No. And if ever I catch myself coveting the ease and dignity of the lordly hats, I shall just cast my thoughts back again to our early privations, to what my mother struggled through for us; and that will bring me down again. We owe all to her; and I hope she will owe something to us in the shape of comforts before she dies,' warmly added Frank, the tears rising to his eyes.

'It is what I have hoped for years,' replied William, in a low tone. 'It is coming, Frank.'

'Well, I think I do see now one step before me. You remember papa's dream, William?'

William simply bowed his head.

'Lately I have not even seen that step. Be-

tween ourselves, I was losing some of my hopefulness; and you know that is what I never lost, whatever the rest of you may have done.'

'We none of us lost hope, Frank. It was hope, trusting hope, that enabled us to bear on. You were over-sanguine.'

'It comes to the same. The step I see before me now, is to get to Oxford as a servitor. To St. John's if I can, for I should like to be with Wall. He is a good plodding fellow, though I don't know that he is overburthened with brains.'

'Not with the quick brains of Frank Halliburton.'

Frank laughed. 'You know Perry, the minor canon? He went to St. John's as a servitor. I shall get him to tell me——'

Frank stopped. The tongs had gone down with a clatter.

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. DARE'S FASHIONABLE GOVERNESS.

'THERE'S such a row at our place!' suddenly announced Cyril Dare, at the Pomeranian Knoll dinner-table, one Monday evening.

'What about?' asked Mr. Dare.

'Some money's missing. At least, a cheque; which amounts to the same thing.'

'Not quite the same,' dissented Mr. Dare. 'Unless it has been cashed.'

'I mean the same for noise,' continued Cyril. 'There's as much fuss being made over it as if it had been fourteen pounds' weight of solid gold. It was a cheque of Dunns'; and the master put it in his desk, or says he put it in. When he came to look for it, it was gone.'

'Who took it?' inquired Mr. Dare.

'Who's to know? That's what we want to find out.'

'What was the amount?'

'Fourteen pounds, I say. A paltry sum. Ashley makes a boast, and says it's not the amount

that bothers him, but the feeling that we must have somebody false near us.'

'Don't speak so slightingly of money,' rebuked Mr. Dare. 'Fourteen pounds are not so easily picked up, that it should be pleasant to lose it.'

'I'm sure I don't want to speak slightingly of money,' returned Cyril, in a rebellious voice. 'You keep me too short, sir, for me not to know the full value of it. But fourteen pounds cannot be much of a loss to Mr. Ashley.'

'If I keep you short, you have forced me to it by your extravagances—you and the rest of you,' responded Mr. Dare, in a short, emphatic tone.

An unpleasant pause ensued. When the father of a family intimates that his means are running low, it is not a welcome announcement. The young Dares had been obliged to hear it often lately. Adelaide broke the silence.

'How was the cheque taken?'

'It was a cheque brought by Dunns' people on Saturday night, in exchange for money, and the master placed it in his open desk in the counting-house,' explained Cyril. 'He went into Mr. Lynn's room to watch the packing, and was away an hour. When he got back, the cheque was gone.'

'Who was in the counting-house?'

'Not a soul except Halliburton. He was there all the while.'

'And no one else went in?' cried Mr. Dare.

'No one,' replied Cyril, sending up his plate for some more meat.

'Why, then, it would look as if Halliburton took it?' exclaimed Mr. Dare.

Cyril raised his eyebrows. 'No one would venture to suggest as much in the hearing of the manufactory. It appears to be impressed with the opinion that Halliburton, like kings, can do no wrong.'

'Mr. Ashley is?'

'Mr. Ashley, and downwards.'

'But, Cyril, if the facts be as you state, Halliburton must have been the one to touch it,' objected Mr. Dare. 'Possibly the cheque may have been only mislaid?'

'The counting-house underwent a thorough search this morning, and every corner of the master's desk was turned out, but nothing came of it. Halliburton appears to be in a maze of surprise as to where it can have gone; but he does not seem to glance at the fact that suspicion may attach to him.'

'Of course Mr. Ashley intends to investigate it officially?' said Mr. Dare.

'He does not say,' replied Cyril. 'He had the two packers before him this morning separately, inquiring if they saw anybody pass through the room to the counting-house on Saturday night. He also questioned me. We had none of us seen anything of the sort.'

'Where were you at the time, Cyril!' eagerly questioned Mr. Dare.

Knowing what we know, it may seem a pointed question. It was not, however, spoken as such. Mr. Dare would probably have suspected the whole manufactory before he had cast suspicion upon his son. The thought which really crossed his mind was, that if his son *had* happened to be in the way, and had seen the thief, whoever he might be, steal into the counting-house, so that, through him, he might be discovered, it would have been a feather in Cyril's cap in the sight of Mr. Ashley. And to find favour with Mr. Ashley, Mr. Dare considered ought to be the ruling aim of Cyril's life.

'I was away from it all, as it happened,' said Cyril, in reply to the question. 'Old Lynn nailed me, on Saturday, to help paying the men. While the cheque was disappearing, I was at the delightful and recreative employment of counting coppers.'

'Did one of the packers get in?'

'Impossible. They were under Mr. Ashley's eye the whole time.'

'Look here, Cyril,' interrupted Mrs. Dare, the first word she had spoken; 'is it sure that that yea and nay Simon of a Quaker has not helped himself to it?'

Cyril burst into a laugh. 'He is not a Simon in the manufactory, I can tell you, ma'am. He is too much of a martinet.'

'Will Mr. Ashley be at the manufactory this evening, Cyril?' questioned Mr. Dare.

'You may as well ask me whether the moon will shine,' was the response of Cyril. 'Mr. Ashley comes sometimes in an evening; but we never know whether he will, or not, beforehand.'

'Because he may be glad of legal assistance,' remarked Mr. Dare, who rarely failed to turn an eye to business.

You may remember the party who formerly sat round Mr. Dare's dinner-table on that day, some years ago, when Herbert was pleased to fancy that he fared badly, not appreciating the excellences of lamb. Two of that party were now absent from it—Julia Dare and Miss Benyon. Julia had married, and had left England with her husband; and Miss Benyon had been discarded for a more fashionable governess.

This fashionable governess sat at the table now. She was called Mademoiselle Varsini. You must not mistake her for French; she was an Italian. She had been a great deal in France, and spoke the language as a native—indeed, it was more ready to her now than her childhood's tongue; and French was the language she was required to converse in with her pupils, Rosa and Minny Dare. English also she spoke fluently, but with a foreign accent. She was peculiar looking. Her complexion was of pale olive, and her eyes were light blue. It is not often that light blue eyes are seen

in conjunction with dark skin. Strange eyes they were—eyes that glistened as if they were of glass; in short, they had, at times, a hard glazed appearance. Her hair, of a purple black, was drawn from her face, and twisted into innumerable rolls at the back of her head. Smooth and beautiful it was, as if a silken rope had been coiled there. Her lips were thin, and compressed in a remarkable degree, which may have been supposed to indicate firmness of character. Tall, and full across the bust for her years, her figure would have been called a fine one. She wore a closely-fitting dress, of some soft, dark material, with small embroidered cuffs and collar.

What were her years? She said twenty-five; but she might be taken for either older or younger. It is difficult to guess with certainty at the age of an Italian woman. As a rule, they look much older than English women; and, when they do begin to show age, they show it rapidly. Mr. Dare had never approved the engaging of this foreign governess. Mrs. Dare had picked her up from an advertisement, and had persisted in engaging her, in spite of the written references being in French, and that she could only read one word in ten of them. Mr. Dare's scruples were solely pecuniary ones. The salary was to be fifty pounds per annum; just double what had been paid to Miss Benyon; and he had heavy expenses on him now. 'What did the girls want with a

fashionable foreign governess?' he asked. But he made no impression upon Mrs. Dare. The lady was engaged, and arrived in Helstonleigh: and Mr. Dare had declared, from that hour to this, that he could not make her out. He professed to be a great reader of the human face, and of human character.

'Has there been any attempt made to cash the cheque?' resumed Mr. Dare to Cyril.

'Ashley said nothing of that,' replied Cyril. 'It was lost after banking hours on Saturday night; therefore he would be sure to stop it at the bank before Monday morning. It is Ashley's loss; Dunns, of course, have nothing to do with it.'

'It would be no difficult matter to change it in the town,' remarked Anthony Dare. 'Anybody would cash a cheque of Dunns'; it is as good as a bank-note.'

Cyril lifted his shoulders. 'The fellow had better not be caught at it, though.'

'What would be the punishment in Angleterre for a crime like that?' spoke up the governess.

'He would be transported for a longer or a shorter period,' replied Mr. Dare.

'What you would phrase *aux galères*, mademoiselle,' struck in Herbert.

'Ah, *ça!*' responded mademoiselle.

As they called her 'mademoiselle' we must do the same. There had been a discussion as to what she was to be called when she first came. *Miss* Varsini was not grand enough. The Signora Var-

sini was not deemed familiar enough for daily use; besides there being some little uncertainty as to the strictly orthodox pronunciation of the word, signora. Therefore, 'mademoiselle' was decided upon. It appeared to be all one to mademoiselle herself. She had been accustomed, she said, to be called mademoiselle in France.

Mr. Dare hurried over his dinner and his wine, and rose. He was going to find out Mr. Ashley. He was in hopes some professional business might arise to him in the investigation of the loss, spoken of by Cyril. He was not a particularly covetous man, and had never been deemed an over-grasping man in business; but circumstances were rendering him so now. His general expenses were enormous—his sons contrived that their expenses should be enormous; and Mr. Dare sometimes did not know where to turn, to meet them. Anthony drained him—it was Mr. Dare's own expression; Herbert drained him; Cyril wanted to drain; George was working on for it. Trifling odds and ends, arising in a lawyer's practice, that, years ago, Mr. Dare would scarcely have cared to trouble himself to undertake, were eagerly sought for by him now. He must work to live. It was not that his practice was a bad one; it was an excellent practice; but, do as Mr. Dare would, his expenses outran it.

He bent his steps to the manufactory. Had Mr. Ashley not been there, Mr. Dare would have

gone on to his house. But Mr. Ashley was there. They were shut in the private-room, and Mr. Ashley gave the particulars of the loss, more in detail than Cyril had given them.

'There is but one opinion to be formed,' observed Mr. Dare. 'Young Halliburton was the thief. The cheque could not go of itself; and nobody else appears to have been near it.'

In urging the case against William, Mr. Dare was influenced by no covert motive. He drew his inferences from the circumstances told to him, and he spoke in accordance with them. The resentment he had once felt against the Halliburtons, for fixing themselves in Helstonleigh (though the resentment was on Mrs. Dare's part, rather than on his), had long ago died away. They did not come in his path, or he in theirs; they did not presume upon the relationship; had not, so far as Mr. Dare knew, made it known abroad; therefore they were quite welcome to be in Helstonleigh, for Mr. Dare. To do Mr. Dare justice, he was rather kindly inclined towards his fellow-creatures, unless self-interest prompted him the other way. Cyril often amused himself at home by abusing William Halliburton: they made tolerable friends and companions when together, but Cyril could not overget his feelings of dislike; a feeling to which jealousy was now added, for William found more favour with Mr. Ashley than he did. Cyril gave vent to his anger in explo-

sions at home, and William was not spared in them: but Mr. Dare had learnt what his son's prejudices were worth.

'It must,' repeated Mr. Dare, 'have been Halliburton.'

'No,' replied Mr. Ashley. 'There are four persons, of all those who were in my manufactory on Saturday night, for whom I will answer as confidently as I would for myself. James Meeking and George Dance are two. I believe them both to be honest as the day; and if additional confirmation, that it was not they, were necessary, neither of them stirred from beneath my own eye during the possible time of the loss. The other two are Samuel Lynn and William Halliburton. Samuel Lynn is above suspicion; and I have watched William grow up from boyhood—always upright, truthful, and honourable; but more truthful, more honourable, year by year, as the years have come.'

'I daresay he is,' acquiesced Mr. Dare. 'Indeed, I like his look myself. There's something unusually frank about it. Of course you will have it officially investigated? I came down to offer you my services in the matter.'

'You are very good,' was the reply of Mr. Ashley. 'Before entering farther into the affair, I must be fully convinced that the cheque's disappearance was not caused by myself. I——'

'By yourself?' interrupted Mr. Dare, in surprise.

'I do not *think* it was, mind; but there is a chance of it. I remember tearing up a paper or two after I received the cheque, and putting the pieces, as I believe, in the waste-paper basket. But I won't answer for it that I did not put them into the fire instead, as I passed it on my way to Mr. Lynn's room to call over the bill of parcels.'

'But you would not tear up the cheque?' cried Mr. Dare.

'Certainly not, by intention. If I did it through carelessness, all I can say is, I *must* have been careless. No; I shall not stir in this matter for a day or two.'

'But why wait?' asked Mr. Dare.

'If the cheque were stolen, it was probably changed somewhere in the town the same night; and this will soon be known. I shall wait.'

Mr. Dare could not bring Mr. Ashley to a more business-like frame of mind. He quitted the manufactory, and went straight to the police-station, there to hold an interview with Mr. Sergeant Delves, a popular officer, with whom Mr. Dare had had dealings before. He stated the case to him, and put up Mr. Delves to ferret out what he could.

'In a private manner, you know, Delves,' said he, winking at the sergeant, whom he held by the shoulder. 'There's no doubt, in my opinion, that the cheque was changed that same night—probably at a public-house. Go to work *sub rosa*

—you understand; and any information you may obtain, bring quietly to me. Don't take it to Mr. Ashley.'

'I understand,' replied Sergeant Delves, a portly man, with a padded breast and a red face, who, in his official costume, always looked as if he were throttling. 'I'll see to it.'

And he did; and very effectively.

CHAPTER XVII.

TAKING AN ITALIAN LESSON.

But the evening is not yet over at Pomeranian Knoll.

The dinner-table had broken up. Anthony Dare quitted the house soon after his father. Mrs. Dare turned to the fire for her after-dinner nap; the young ladies, save Adelaide, proceeded to the drawing-room. Adelaide Dare was thinner than formerly; and there was a worn, restless look in her face, that told of care or of disappointment: she remained in her seat at the dessert-table, and, fencing herself round with a newspaper, lest Mrs. Dare's eyes should open, took a letter from her pocket, and spread it on the table.

The Viscount Hawkesley had never come forward to make her the Viscountess; but he had not given up his visits to Pomeranian Knoll, and Adelaide had never given over hoping. It was one of his letters she was poring over now. Two or three years back she might have married well. A clergyman had been desirous to make her his wife. Adelaide declined. She had, possibly, her

own private reasons for believing in the good faith of Lord Hawkesley. She was not the first who has thrown away the substance to grasp the shadow.

Mademoiselle Varsini, on leaving the dinner-table, had gone up to the school-room. There she stirred the fire into a blaze, sat down in a chair, and bent her head in what seemed to be an attitude of listening.

She did not listen in vain. Soon, stealthy footsteps were heard ascending the stairs, and a streak of vermilion flashed into her olive cheek, and she pressed her hand upon her bosom, as if to still its beating. '*Que je suis bête!*' she murmured. French was far more familiar to her than her native tongue.

The footsteps proved to be those of Herbert Dare. A tall, handsome man now, better looking than Anthony. He, Herbert, would have been very handsome, but that his features were spoiled by the free expression they had worn in his youth —free as that which characterised the face of Mr. Dare. He was coming in to pay a visit to the governess. He paid her a good many visits: possibly, he deemed it a mark of politeness to do so. Some gentlemen are polite, and some are the contrary; some take every opportunity of improving their minds, some don't care whether they improve them or not. Herbert Dare we should count amidst the former class: a thirst for foreign languages

must, undoubtedly, be reckoned one of the desires for improvement. Minny Dare had one evening broken in upon a visit her brother was paying to mademoiselle, and she (very impertinently, it must be owned) inquired what he was doing there. 'Taking an Italian lesson,' Herbert answered, and he did not want her, Minny, to bother him over it. Minnie made a wry face at the Italian books spread out between Herbert and mademoiselle, seated opposite each other, at either end of the table, and withdrew with all speed, lest the governess should press her in to share it. Minny did not relish Italian lessons so much as Herbert appeared to do.

He came in with quiet footsteps, and the first thing he did was to—lock the door. The action may have been intended as a quiet reproof to Miss Minny: if so, it is a pity she was not there to profit by it.

'Have they asked for me in the salon?' began the governess.

'Not they,' replied Herbert. 'They are too much occupied with their own concerns.'

'Herbert, why were you not here on Saturday night?' she asked.

'On Saturday night? Oh—I remember. I had to go out to keep an engagement.'

'You might have spoken to me first, then,' she answered, in a tone of resentment. 'Just one little word. I did come up here, and I waited—I waited!

After the tea, I came up, and I waited again. Ah! quelle patience!'

'Waited to give me my Italian lesson.'

Herbert Dare spoke in a voice of laughing raillery. The Italian girl did not seem inclined to laugh. She stood on one side the fire, and its blaze —it was the only light in the room—flickered on her compressed lips. More compressed than ever, were they, to-night.

'Now, what's the use of your turning cross, Bianca?' continued Herbert, still laughing. 'You are as exacting as if I paid you a guinea a lesson, and went upon the system of "no lesson, no pay." If ——'

'Bah!' interrupted mademoiselle, angrily: and it certainly was not respectful of Herbert, as pupil, to call her by her Christian name—if it was that which angered her. 'I am getting nearly tired of it all.'

'Tired of me! You might have a worse pupil——'

'Will you be quiet, then!' cried she, stamping her foot. 'I am not inclined for folly to-night. You shall not say again you are coming here, if you don't come, mind, as you did on Saturday night.'

'Well, I had an engagement, and I went straight off from the dinner-table to keep it,' answered Herbert, becoming serious. 'Upon my word and honour, it was not my fault, Bianca; it was

a business engagement. I had not time to come here before I went.'

'Then you might have come when you returned,' she said.

'Scarcely,' replied he. 'I was not home till two in the morning.'

Bianca Varsini lifted her strange eyes to his. 'Why tell me that?' she asked, her voice changing to one of mournful complaint. 'I know you went out from dinner—I watched you out; and I saw you when you went out again. It was past ten. I saw you with my own eyes.'

'You must have good eyes, Bianca. I went out from the dinner-table——'

'Not then—not then; I speak not of then,' she vehemently interrupted. 'You might have come here before you went out the second time.'

'I declare I don't know what you mean,' he said, staring at her. 'I did not come in until two in the morning. It had struck two.'

'But I saw you,' she persisted. 'It was moonlight, and I saw you cross the lawn from the dining-room window, and go out. I was at this window, and I watched you go in the direction of the gate. It was long past ten.'

'Bianca, you were dreaming! I was not near the house.'

Again she stamped her foot. '*Why* you deceive me? Would I say I saw you if I did not?'

Herbert had once seen Bianca Varsini in a pas-

sion. He did not care to see her in one again. When he said that he had not come near the house, from the time of his quitting it on rising from dinner, until two in the morning, he had said the strict truth. What the Italian girl was driving at, he could not imagine; but he deemed it as well to drop the subject.

'You are a folle, Bianca, as you often call yourself,' said he, jestingly laying hold of both her hands. 'You go into a temper for nothing. I'd get rid of that haste, if I were you.'

'It was my mother's temper,' she answered, drawing her hands away, and letting them fall by her side. 'Do you know what she once did? She spit in the face of the Archevêque of Paris!'

'She was a lady!' cried Herbert, ironically. 'How was that?'

'He offended her. He was passing her in procession at the *fête dieu*, and he said something reproachful to her, and it put her in a temper, and she spit at him! She could do worse than that if she liked! She could have died for those who were kind to her; but, let them offend her—je les en fais mes complimens!'

'I say, mademoiselle, who was your mother?'

'Never you mind! She was on the stage; not what you English call good. But she was good to me; and she wished me to be what she was not. When I was twelve she put me into a convent. La maudite place!'

Herbert laughed. He knew enough of French to understand the expression.

'It was maudite to me. I must not dance; I must not sing; I must not have my liberty to do the simplest thing on earth. I must be up in the morning at my prayers; and then at my lessons all day; and then at prayers again. I did pray. I did pray to the Virgin to take me from it. I nearly prayed my heart out—and she never heard me! I had been there a year—figure to yourself, a year!—when my mother came to see me. She had been back in Italy. "Take me away," I said to her, "before I die!" "No, Bianca mia," she answered, "I leave you here that you may not die; that your life may be happier than mine is, for mine is the vraie misère." I not tell you in Italian, as she spoke, for you not understand it,' rapidly interrupted mademoiselle. 'My mother, she continued to me. "When you are instructed, you shall become a gouvernante in a family of the noblesse; you shall consort with the princes without shame; and, perhaps, you will make the good parti in marriage. Though you have no fortune, you will be accomplished; you will have the manière and the tournure; you will be belle." Do you think me belle?' she abruptly broke off again.

'Enchanting!' answered Herbert. 'Have I not told you so five hundred times?'

She stole a glance at the little old-fashioned oval

glass which hung over the mantel-piece, and then went on.

'My mother would not take me out. Though I lay down on the flag-stones of the visitors' parlour, though I wept for it, she would not take me out. "It is for your good, Bianca mia," she said. And I remained there seven years. Seven years! Do you figure it?'

'But I suppose you got reconciled?'

'We get reconciled to the worst in time,' she answered, dreamily gazing into the fire with her strange eyes. 'I pressed down my despair into myself at first, and I looked out for the opportunity to run away. We were as closely kept as the nuns in their cells, in their barred rooms, in their grated chapel; but, sooner than not have had my will, and get away, I would have set the place on fire!'

'I say, mademoiselle, don't you talk treason!' cried Herbert, laughing.

'Do you think I would not?' she answered, turning to him, a gleaming look of fierceness in her eyes. 'But I had to wait for the good opportunity to escape; and, while I waited, news came that my mother had died. She caught a cold one night when she was in her bare evening robe, and it settled in her throat, and formed a dépôt, and she died. And so it was all over with my escape! My mother gone, I had nowhere to fly to. And I stopped in that enfer seven years.'

'You are complimentary to convents, Bianca. Maudite in one breath, enfer in another!'

'They are all that, and worse!' intemperately responded the Italian girl. 'They are—mais n'importe, c'est fini pour moi. I had to beat down my heart then, and stop in one. Ah! I know not how I did it. I look back, and wonder. Seven years!'

'But who paid for you all that time?'

'My mother was not poor. She had enough for that. She made the arrangements with a priest when she was dying, and paid the money to him. The convent educated me, and dressed me, and made me hard. Their cold rules beat down my rebellious heart; beat it down to hardness. I should not have been so hard but for that convent!'

'Oh, you are hard, then?' was the remark of Herbert Dare.

'I can be!' nodded Mademoiselle Varsini. 'Better not cross *me!*'

'And how did you get out of the convent?'

'When I was nineteen, they sent me out into a situation, to teach music and my own language, and French and English. They taught well in the convent: I could speak English then as readily as I speak it now; and they gave me a box of clothes and four five-franc pieces, saying that was the last of my mother's effects. What cared I? Had they turned me out penniless, I should have jumped to go. I served in that first situation two years. It was easy, and it was good pay.'

'French people?'

'But, certainly: Parisians. It was not more than one mile off the convent. There was but one little pupil.'

'Why did you leave?'

'I was put in a passion one day, and madame said, after that, she was frightened to keep me. Ah! I have had adventures, I can tell you. In the next place, I did not stay three months; the ennui came to me, and I left it for another that I found; and the other one I liked—I had my liberty. I should have stayed in that, but one came and turned me out of it.'

'A fresh governess?'

'No; a man. A hideous. He was madame's brother, and he was wrinkled and yellow, and his long skinny fingers were like claws. He wanted me to marry him; he said he was rich. Sell myself to that monster? No!—continue a governess, rather. One evening madame and my two pupils had gone to the Odeon, and he came to the little étude where I sat. He locked the door, and said he would not unlock it till I gave him a promise to be his wife. I stormed, and I stormed: he tried to lay hold of my hand, the imbecile! He laughed at me, and said I was caged——'

'Why did you not ring the bell?' interrupted Herbert.

'Bon! Do we have bells in every room in the old Parisian houses? I would have pulled open

the window, but he stood against the fastening, laughing still; so I dashed my hand through a pane, and the glass clattered down to the court below, and the servants came out to look up. "I cannot undo the étude door," I called to them; "come and break it open!" So that hideous undid it then, and the servants got some water and bathed my hand. "But why need the signora have put her hand through the glass? Why not have opened the window," said one. "What is that to you?" I said. "You will not have to pay for it. Bind my hand up." They wrapped it in a handkerchief, and I put on my bonnet and cloak, and went out. Madeline—she was the cook, and a good old soul—saw me. "But where is the signora going so late as this?" she asked. "Where should I be going, but to the pharmacien's?" I answered; and I went on my way.'

'We say chemist's in England,' observed Herbert. 'Did he find your hand much damaged?'

'I did not go there. Think you I made attention to my hand? I went to the—what you call it?—cutlers' shops, through the Rue Montmartre, and I bought a two-edged stiletto. It was that long—pointing from her wrist to the end of her finger—besides the handle. I showed it to that hideous the next day. "You come to the room where I sit again," I said to him, "and you will see." He told madame, his sister, and she said I must leave.'

Herbert Dare looked at her—at her pale face, which had gone white in the telling, her glistening, stony eyes, her drawn-in lips. 'You would not have dared to use the stiletto, though!' he cried, in some wonder.

'I not dare! You do not know me. When I am aroused there's not a thing I would not dare to do. I am not ruffled at trifles: things that excite others do not trouble me. 'Bah! What matter trifles?' I say. My mother always told me to let the evil spirit lie torpid within me, or I should not die in my bed.'

'I say,' cried Herbert, half mockingly, 'what religion do you call yourself?'

She took the question literally. 'I am a Catholic or Protestant, as is agreeable to my places,' was the very candid answer. 'I am not a dévote —a saint. Where's the use of it?'

'That is why you generally have those violent headaches on Sunday,' said Herbert Dare, laughing. 'You ought——'

There was an interruption. Rosa Dare's footsteps were heard on the stairs, and they halted at the door.

'Mademoiselle Varsini!' she called out.

Mademoiselle Varsini did not answer. Herbert Dare flung his handkerchief over the handle of the door in such a manner that it hid the keyhole. Rosa Dare tried the door, found it fastened, and went off grumbling—

'It's my belief mademoiselle locks herself in there to get a nap after dinner, as mamma does in the dining-room!'

She was heard to enter the drawing-room and bang the door. Herbert softly opened that of the school-room, and went down after his sister.

'I say, Herbert,' cried Rosa, when he entered, 'have you seen anything of mademoiselle?'

'I!' responded Herbert. 'Do you think I keep mademoiselle in my pocket?'

'She goes and locks herself up in the school-room after dinner, and I can't think what she does there, or what she can be at,' retorted Rosa.

'At her devotions, perhaps,' suggested Herbert.

The words did not please Mrs. Dare, who had then joined the circle. 'Herbert, I will not have Mademoiselle Varsini ridiculed,' she spoke quite sternly. 'She is a most efficient instructress for Rosa and Minny, and we must be careful not to give her offence, lest she should leave.'

'I'm sure I have heard of foreign women telling their beads till cock-crowing,' persisted Herbert.

'Those are Roman Catholics. A Protestant, like Mademoiselle Varsini——'

Mrs. Dare's angry words were cut short by the appearance of Mademoiselle Varsini herself. She, the governess, turned to Rosa. 'What did you want just now when you came to the school-room door?'

'I wanted you here to show me that filet stitch,'

answered Rosa, some impertinence peeping out in her tone. 'And I don't see why you should not answer when I knock, mademoiselle.'

'It may not always suit me to answer,' was the calm reply of the governess. 'My time is my own after dinner; and Madame Dare will agree with me that a governess should hold full control over her school-room.'

'You are perfectly right, mademoiselle,' acquiesced Mrs. Dare.

Mademoiselle went to the piano, and dashed off a symphony. She was a brilliant player. Herbert, looking at his watch and finding it later than he thought, hurried from the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A VISION IN HONEY FAIR.

THE surmise that the missing cheque had been changed into good money on the Saturday night, proved to be a correct one. White, the butcher at the corner of the shambles, had given change for it, and locked up the cheque in his cash-box. Had he paid it into the bank on Monday, he would have found what it was worth. But he did not. Mr. White was a fat man with a good-humoured countenance and shiny black hair. Sergeant Delves proceeded to his house some time on the Tuesday.

'I hear you cashed a cheque of the Messrs. Dunn on Saturday night,' began he. 'Who brought it to you?'

'Ah, what about that cheque?' returned the butcher. 'One of your men has been in here, asking a lot of questions.'

'A good deal about it,' said the sergeant. 'It was stole from Mr. Ashley.'

'Stole from Mr. Ashley!' echoed the butcher, staring with all his eyes at Sergeant Delves.

'Stole out of his desk. And you stand a nice chance, White, of losing the money. You should be more cautious. Who was it brought it here?'

''Twas a gentleman. A respectable man, at any rate. Who says it's stole?'

'I do,' replied the sergeant, sitting himself down on the meat-block—rather a damp seat, from its just having been cleaned with hot water. Delves liked to make himself familiar with his old friends in Helstonleigh in a patronising manner; it was only lately he had been promoted to be a sergeant. 'Now! let's have the particulars, White.'

'I had just shut up my shop, all but the door, when in come a gentleman in a cloak and cap. "Could you oblige the Messrs. Dunn with change for a cheque, Mr. White?" says he, handing a cheque to me. "Yes, sir," said I, "I can; very happy to oblige 'em. Would you like it in gold?" Well, he said he would like it in gold, and I gave it to him. "Thank ye," said he; "I'd have got it nearer if I could; for I'm troubled to death with tooth-ache, but people are shut up:" and I noticed that he had kept his white handkerchief up to his mouth and nose. He went out with the gold, and I put up the cheque. And that's all I know about it, Delves.'

'Don't you know who it was?'

'No, I don't. He had got a cap on, with the ears coming down his cheeks; and, what with that, and the peak of the cap falling over his eyes, and

the white handkerchief he held up to his nose, I didn't so much as get a sight at his face. The shop was pretty near dark, too, for the gas was out. There was only one tallor candle at the pay place.'

'If a man came in, disguised like that, asking to have a cheque changed into gold, it might have occurred to some tradesmen that there'd be some'at wrong about it,' cried the sergeant.

'I didn't know he was disguised,' objected the butcher. 'I saw it was a good cheque of the Messrs Dunns', and I never gave a thought to nothing else. I've had their cheques afore to-day. Mr. William Dunn has dealt here for meat this twenty year. But, now that it's put into my head, I begin to think that he *was* disguised,' continued the butcher. 'His voice was a odd one, thick and low, and he spoke as if he had got plums in his mouth.'

'Should you know him again?'

'Ay. That is if he came in dressed as he was then. I'd know the cloak amid a hundred. It was one of them old-fashioned plaid rockelows.'

'Roquelaures,' corrected the sergeant.

'Something of that. The collar was lined with red, with a little edge of fur on it. There's a few such shaped cloaks in the town now, made of blue serge or cloth.'

'What time was it?' asked the sergeant.

'Just eleven. I was a-shutting up.'

Sergeant Delves took possession of the cheque

and proceeded to the office of Mr. Dare. A long conference ensued, and then they went out together towards Mr. Ashley's manufactory. On the road they happened to meet Cyril, and Mr. Dare drew him aside.

'Do you happen to know anybody who wears an old-fashioned plaid cloak?' he asked.

'Halliburton wears one,' replied Cyril. 'The greatest object of a thing you ever saw. I say,' continued Cyril, 'what's old Delves doing with you?'

'Not much,' carelessly said Mr. Dare. 'He has been looking after a little private business for me.'

'Oh, is that all!' and Cyril, feeling re-assured, tore off on the errand he was bound. For reasons best known to himself, it would not have pleased him that Mr. Sergeant Delves should be pressed into the affair of the cheque. At least, Cyril would have preferred that he should not.

He executed his commission, a business one that he had been charged with by Samuel Lynn, turned back, passed the manufactory, and took his way to Honey Fair on a little matter of his own. It was only the purchase of a dog—not to make a mystery of it. A dog which had taken Cyril's fancy, and for which he and the owner had not yet been able to come to terms. So he was going up again to try his powers of persuasion.

As he walked rapidly through Honey Fair, he saw a little bit of by-play on the opposite side. A

young woman in a tattered gown, and a dirty bonnet drawn over her face, was walking along as rapidly as he. Her bent head, her humble attitude, her shrinking air, her haste to get out of the sight of others, all betrayed that she, from some cause or other, was not in good odour with the world around. That she felt herself under a stigma, a ban, was but too apparent: it was a ban of humiliation, for which she had only herself to thank. The women, who met her, hurried past with a toss of the head, and then stood to peep after her, as she disappeared in the distance.

She hurried; hurried past them; glad, it seemed, to be away from their stern looks, their condemning eyes. Had you seen her, you never would have recognised her. In the dim eye, darker than of yore, the white cheek, the skeleton form, no likeness remained of the once blooming Caroline Mason.

Just as she passed opposite to Cyril, Eliza Tyrrett came out of a house and met her full; and Eliza, picking up her skirts, lest they should touch those contaminating ones, swept past with a sidelong reproach of the eye, and a scornful gesture. Caroline's head only bent the lower, as she glided away from her old companion.

It had been just as well that Charlotte East had not sent back that bundle, years ago, to surprise Anthony Dare. It was years now, since Charlotte herself had come to the same conclusion.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DUPLICATE CLOAKS.

LEANING his back against the corner of the mantelpiece by the side of the blazing fire in his private-room, calmly surveying those ranged before him, and listening to their tale with an impassive face, was Thomas Ashley. Sergeant Delves and Mr. Dare were giving him the account of the changing of the cheque, obtained from White, the butcher. Samuel Lynn stood near the master's desk, his brow knit as with perplexity, his countenance keen. The description of the cloak, tallying so exactly with the one worn by William Halliburton, led Mr. Dare to the conclusion, nay, to the positive conviction, that the butcher's visitor could have been no other than William. The sergeant took the same view; but the sergeant adopted it with difficulty.

'It's an odd thing for *him* to turn thief,' said he, reflectively. 'I'd have trusted that young fellow, sir, with untold gold,' he added, to Mr. Ashley. 'Here's another proof how we may be deceived.'

'I told you,' said Mr. Dare, turning to Mr. Ashley, 'that it could be no other than Halliburton.'

'Thee will permit me to say, friend Dare, that I do not agree with thy deductions,' interposed the Quaker, before Mr. Ashley could answer.

'Why, what would you have?' returned Mr. Dare. 'Nothing can be plainer. Ask Sergeant Delves if he thinks further proof can be wanted.'

'Many a man has been hanged upon less,' was the oracular answer of Sergeant Delves.

'What part of my deductions do you object to?' inquired Mr. Dare of the Quaker.

'Thee art assuming — if I understand thee correctly—that there is no other cloak in the city so similar to William's as to be mistaken for it.'

'Just so.'

'Then, friend, I tell thee that there is.'

Mr. Dare opened his eyes. 'Who wears it?' he asked.

'That is another question,' said Samuel Lynn. 'I should be glad to find out myself; for curiosity's sake.'

Then Mr. Lynn told the story—of his having observed a man, whom he had taken to be William, walking at the back of his house, apparently waiting for something. 'I saw him on two evenings,' he observed, 'at some considerable interval apart. The figure bore a perfect resem-

blance to William Halliburton; the height, the cloak, the cap—all appeared to be his. I taxed him with it. He denied it *in toto*, said he had not been walking there at all; and I believed he was attempting, for the first time since I have known him, to deceive me. I——'

'Are you sure he was not?' put in Mr. Dare.

'Thee should allow me to finish, friend. Last night I was home somewhat earlier than usual—thee can recollect why,' the Quaker added, looking at Mr. Ashley. 'I was up in my room, and I saw the same figure pacing about in precisely the same manner. William's denial had staggered me, otherwise I could have been ready to affirm that it was himself, and no other. The moon was not up; but it was a very light night, and I marked every point in the cloak—it was as like William's as two peas are like each other. What he could want, pacing at the back of my house and of his, puzzled me much. I——'

'What time was this, Mr Lynn?' interrupted the sergeant.

'Past eight o'clock. Later than the hour at which I had seen him on the two previous occasions. 'It is William Halliburton of a surety,' I said to myself; and I thought I would try and pounce upon him, and so convict him of the falsehood he had told. I quitted my house by the front door, went down the road past the houses,

and entered the gate admitting into the field. I walked up quietly, keeping under the hedge as much as possible, and approached William—as I deemed him to be. He was then standing still, and gazing at the upper windows of my house. In spite of my caution, he heard me, and turned round. Whether he knew me or not, I cannot say; but he clipped the cloak around him with a hasty movement, and made off right across the field. I would not be balked if I could help it. I opened friend Jane Halliburton's back gate, and proceeded through the garden and house to the parlour, which I entered without ceremony. There sat William at his books.'

'Then it was not he, after all?' cried Mr. Dare, interested in the tale.

'Of a surety it was not he. I tell thee, friend, he was seated quietly at his studies. "Has thee lent thy cloak to a friend to-night?" I asked him. He looked surprised, and said he had not. But, to be convinced, I requested to see his cloak, and he took me outside the door, and there was the cloak hanging in the passage, his cap beside it. That is why I did not approve of thy deductions, friend Anthony Dare, in assuming that the cloak, which the man had on who changed the cheque, must be William Halliburton's cloak,' concluded Mr. Lynn.

'You say the man looked like William when you were close to him?' inquired Mr. Ashley, who

thought the whole affair very curious, and who now broke silence for the first time.

'Very much like him,' answered Samuel Lynn. 'But the resemblance may have been only in the cloak and cap. The face was not discernible; by accident or by design, it was kept in concealment. I think there need not be better negative proof that it was not William who changed the cheque.'

Mr. Ashley smiled. 'Without this evidence of Mr. Lynn's I could have told you it was a waste of time to cast suspicion on William Halliburton to me,' said he, addressing the sergeant and Mr. Dare. 'Were you to come here and accuse myself, it would make just as much impression upon me. Wait an instant, gentlemen.'

He went to the door, opened it, and called in William. The latter came in, erect, courteous, noble — never suspecting the police-sergeant's business there could have anything to do with him.

'William,' began his master, 'who is it that wears a cloak similar to yours, in the town?'

'I am unable to say, sir,' was William's ready reply. 'Until last night,' and he turned to Samuel Lynn with a smile, 'I should have said there was not another like it. I suppose now there must be one.'

'If there is one, there may be more,' remarked Mr. Ashley. 'The fact is, William, the cheque has been traced. It was changed at White's, the

butcher; and the person, changing it, wore a cloak, it seems, very similar to yours.'

'Indeed!' cried William, with animation. 'Well, sir, of course there may be many such cloaks in the town. All I can say is, I have not seen them.'

'There can't be many,' spoke up the sergeant, 'if it be the old-fashioned sort of thing described to me.'

William looked the sergeant full in the face, with his open countenance, his honest eyes. No guilt there. 'Would you like to see my cloak?' he asked. 'It may be a guide, if you think the one, worn, resembled it.'

The sergeant nodded. 'I was going to tell you to bring it in, if it was here.'

William brought it in. 'It is one of the bygones,' said he, laughing. 'I have some thoughts of forwarding it to the British Museum, as a specimen of antiquity. Stay! I will put it on, that you may see its beauties the better.'

He threw the cloak over his shoulders, and exhibited himself off, as he had done once before in that counting-house for the benefit of Samuel Lynn. 'I think the British Museum will get it,' he continued, in the same joking spirit. 'Not until the winter's over, though. It is a good friend on a cold night.'

Sergeant Delves's eyes were riveted on the cloak, as though he never meant to take them off

again. 'Where have I seen that cloak?' he mused, in a dreamy tone. 'Lately, too!'

'You may have seen me in it,' said William.

The sergeant shook his head. He lifted one hand to his temples, and proceeded to rub them gently, as if the process would assist his memory, never once relaxing in his fixed gaze.

'Did White say the changer of the cheque was a tall man?' asked Mr. Ashley.

'Yes,' said Mr. Dare. 'Whether he meant as tall as William Halliburton, I cannot say. There are not—why I should think there are not a hundred men in the town who tower to that height,' he added, regarding William.

'Yourself one of them,' said William, turning to him, with a smile.

Mr. Dare shook his head, a regret for his past youth crossing his heart. 'Ay, once. I am beginning to grow downward now.'

Mr. Ashley was buried in reflection. There was a curious sound of mystery about the tale altogether, to his ears. That there were many thieves in Helstonleigh, he had no doubt—people who would appropriate a cheque, or anything else that came in their way; but why the same person—if it was the same—should promenade the cold field at night, watching Samuel Lynn's house, was inexplicable. 'It may not be the same,' he observed, aloud. 'Shall you watch for the man again?' he asked of Mr. Lynn.

'I shall not give myself much trouble over it now,' was the reply. 'While I was concerned to ascertain William's truthfulness——'

'I scarcely think you need have doubted it, Mr. Lynn,' interrupted William.

'True. I have never doubted thee yet. But it appeared to be thy word against the sight of my own eyes. The master will understand——'

A most extraordinary interruption came from Sergeant Delves. He threw up his head with a start, and gave vent to a shrill, prolonged whistle. 'It looks black!' cried he.

'What did thee say, friend Delves?'

'I beg pardon, gentlemen,' answered the sergeant. 'I was not speaking to any of you; I was following up the bent of my own thoughts. It flashed into my mind, all on a sudden, who it is that I have seen in one of these cloaks.'

'And who is it?' asked Mr. Dare.

'You must excuse me, sir, if I keep that to myself,' was the answer.

'As tall a man as William Halliburton?'

The sergeant ran his eyes up and down William's figure. 'A shade taller, I should say, if anything.'

'And it struck me that the man who made off across the field was a shade taller,' observed Samuel Lynn.

'Well I can't make sense of it,' resumed Mr. Dare, breaking a pause. 'Let us allow, if you

like, that there are fifty such cloaks in the town. Unless one, wearing such, had access to Mr. Ashley's counting-house, to this very room that we are now in, how does the fact, of there being others, remove the suspicion of guilt from William Halliburton?'

Mr. Dare had not intended wilfully to cause him pain. He had forgotten for the moment that William was a stranger to the doubt raised, touching himself. Amidst the deep silence that ensued, William looked from one to the other.

'Who suspects me?' he asked, surprise the only emotion in his tone.

Sergeant Delves tapped him significantly on the shoulder. 'Never you trouble yourself, young sir. If what has come into my mind be right, it isn't *you*.'

When he and Mr. Dare went out, Mr. Ashley followed them to the outer gate. As they stood there talking, Frank Halliburton passed.

'Look here,' thought the sergeant to himself, 'there's not much doubt as to the black sheep—I see that: but it's as well to be on the sure side. Young man,' cried he aloud to Frank, in the authoritative, patronising manner which Mr. Sergeant Delves was fond of putting on when he could, 'what time did your brother William get home last Saturday night? I suppose you know, if you were at home yourself.'

Frank looked at him rather haughtily. '*I*

know,' he replied. 'I have yet to learn why you need know.'

'Tell him, Frank,' said Mr. Ashley, with a smile.

'It was a little after ten,' said Frank.

'Did he go out again?' asked the sergeant.

'Out again at that time!' cried Frank. 'No: he did not go out again. We sat talking together ever so long, and then went up to bed.'

'Ah!' rejoined the sergeant. It was all he answered. And he wished Mr. Ashley good day, and departed with Mr. Dare.

'I am going to Oxford at Easter, Mr. Ashley,' cried Frank with animation.

'I am pleased to hear it.'

'But only as a servitor. I don't mind,' he added, throwing back his head with pardonable pride. 'Let me once get a start, and I hope to rise above some who go as gentlemen-commoners. I intend to make this my circuit,' he went on, half jokingly, half seriously.

'You are ambitious, Frank. I heartily wish you success. There's nothing like having a good heart.'

'Oh, yes, success is not doubtful. I'll do brav battle with all the obstructions in my course. Good afternoon, sir.'

William, curious and anxious, could make nothing of his books that night at home. At length he threw up, put on the noteable cloak, and went

down to the manufactory. He found Mr. Ashley there; and the counting-house soon received an addition to its company in the person of Sergeant Delves. He had come in search of William. Not being aware that William was allowed the privilege of spending his evenings at home, he had supposed the manufactory was the place to find him in.

'I want you down at White's,' said the sergeant. 'Put on your cloak, will you be so good, Mr. Halliburton, and come with me?'

'Do you suspect me?' was William's answer.

'No, I don't,' returned the sergeant. 'I told you before, to-day, that I did not. The fact is'—dropping his voice to a mysterious whisper—'that I want to do a little bit of private inquiry on my own account. I have got a clue to the party: and I'd like to work it out.'

'If you have a sufficient clue, the party had better be arrested at once,' observed Mr. Ashley.

'Ah, but it's not sufficient clue for that,' nodded the sergeant. 'No, Mr. Ashley, sir; my strong advice to you is, keep quiet a bit.'

They started for the butcher's, William wearing his cloak and cap, and Mr. Ashley accompanying them. Mr. Ashley had his own curiosity upon various points; perhaps his own doubts.

'It is strange who this man can be who walks at the back of your house,' observed Mr. Ashley to William as they went along. 'What can

be his motive for walking there, dressed like you?'

'It is curious, sir.'

'I should suppose it can only arise from a desire that he should be taken for you,' continued Mr. Ashley. 'But to what end? Why should he walk there at all?'

'Why, indeed!' responded William.

'What coloured gloves are you wearing?' abruptly interrupted Sergeant Delves.

William took his hands from beneath his cloak, and held them out. They were of the darkest possible colour, next to black; the shade called in the glove trade 'corbeau.' 'These are all I have in use at present,' he said. 'They are nearly new.'

'Have you worn any light gloves lately? Tan, or fawn?'

'I scarcely ever wear tan gloves. I have not put on a pair for months.'

They arrived at the butcher's shop, and entered it. Mr. White was standing at his block, a cleaver in his hand, chopping a bone in two. He lifted his head, and touched his hair to Mr. Ashley.

'Is this the gentleman who got the money of you for the cheque?' began Sergeant Delves, without circumlocution.

Mr. White put down his cleaver and took a survey of William. 'It's like the cloak and cap that the other wore,' said he.

Sergeants of police catch up words quickly. 'That the "other" wore? Then you do not think it was this one?'

'No, I don't,' decided the butcher. 'The one who brought the cheque was a shorter man.'

'Shorter!' repeated Mr. Ashley, remembering it had been said in his counting-house that the man, who appeared to be personating William, was thought to have the advantage the other way. 'You mean taller, White.'

'No, sir, I mean shorter. I am sure he was shorter. Not much, though.'

There was a pause. 'You observed that his gloves were tan, I think,' said the sergeant.

'Something of that sort. Nice clean light gloves they were, like gentlemen wear.'

'Finally, then, White, you decide that this was not the gentleman?'

'Not he,' said the butcher. 'It's not the same voice.'

'The voice goes for nothing,' said Sergeant Delves. 'The other one had got plums in his mouth.'

'Well,' said the butcher, 'I think I should have known Mr. Halliburton, in spite of any disguise, had he come.'

'Don't make too sure, White,' said the sergeant, with one of his wise nods. 'He, that came, might have turned out to be just as familiar to you as Mr. Halliburton, if he had let you see his

face. The fact is, White, there's somebody going about with a cloak like this, and we want to find out who it is. Mr. Halliburton would give a pound out of his pocket, I'm sure, to know.'

'I'd give two,' said Mr. Ashley, with a smile.

'Sir,' asked the butcher of Mr. Ashley, 'what about the money? Shall I have to lose it?'

'Now, White, just you wait a bit,' put in the sergeant. 'If it was a gentleman that changed it, perhaps we shall get it out of *him*. Any way, you keep quiet.'

They left the shop—standing a moment together before parting. The sergeant's road lay one way; Mr. Ashley's and William's another. 'This only makes the matter more obscure,' observed Mr. Ashley, alluding to what had passed.

'Not at all. It makes it all the more clear,' was the cool reply of the sergeant.

'White says the man was shorter than Mr. Halliburton.'

'It's just what I expected him to say,' nodded the sergeant. 'If I am on the right scent—and I'd lay a thousand pound on it!—the man who changed the cheque *is* shorter. I just wanted White's confirming evidence on the point,' he added, looking at William, 'which is why I asked you to come down, dressed in your cloak. Good-night, gentlemen.'

He turned up the shambles. And Mr. Ashley and William walked away side by side.

CHAPTER XX.

A HOLE DUG BY STARLIGHT.

THE conversation at Mr. Dare's dinner table again turned upon the loss of the cheque, and the proceedings thereon. It was natural that it should turn upon it. Mr. Dare's mind was full of it; and he gave utterance to various conjectures and speculations, as they occurred to him.

'In spite of what they say, I cannot help thinking that it must have been William Halliburton,' he remarked with emphasis. 'He alone was in the counting-house when the cheque disappeared; and the person, changing it at White's, is proved to bear the strongest possible resemblance to him; at all events, to his dress. The face was hidden—as of course it would be. People who attempt to pass off stolen cheques, take pretty good care that their features are not seen.'

'But who hesitates to bring it home to Halliburton?' inquired Mrs. Dare.

'They all do—as it seems to me. Ashley won't hear a word; laughs at the idea of Halliburton's

being capable of it, and says we may as well accuse himself. That's nothing: as Cyril says, Mr. Ashley appears to be imbued with the idea that Halliburton can do no wrong: but now Delves has veered round. He shifts the blame entirely off Halliburton.'

'Upon whom does he shift it?' asked Anthony Dare.

'He won't say,' replied Mr. Dare. 'He has grown mysterious over it since the afternoon; nodding and winking, and giving no explanation. He says he knows who it is who possesses the second cloak.'

'The second cloak!' The words were a puzzle to most at table, and Mr. Dare had to explain that another cloak, similar to that worn by William Halliburton, was supposed to be in existence.

Cyril looked up, with wonder marked on his face. 'Does Delves say there are two such cloaks?' asked he.

'That there are two such cloaks appears to be an indisputable fact, replied Mr. Dare. 'The one cloak was parading behind the Halliburtons' house last night. Samuel Lynn went up to it——'

'The cloak parading tout seul—alone?' interrupted the Signora Varsini, with a perplexed air.

A laugh went round the table. 'With the wearer in it, mademoiselle,' said Mr. Dare, con-

tinuing the account of Samuel Lynn's adventure. 'Thus the fact of there being two cloaks is established,' he proceeded. 'Still, that tells nothing; unless the owner of the other has access to Mr. Ashley's counting-house. I pointed this fact out to them. But Delves—which is most unaccountable—differed from me; and when we parted, he expressed an opinion, with that confident nod of his, that it was not Halliburton's cloak which had been in the mischief at the butcher's, but the other.'

'What a thundering falsehood!' burst forth Herbert Dare.

'*Sir!*' cried Mr. Dare, while all around the table stared at Herbert's excited manner.

Herbert had the grace to feel ashamed of his abrupt and intemperate rudeness. 'I beg your pardon, sir; I spoke in my surprise. I mean that Delves must be telling a falsehood, if he seeks to throw the guilt off Halliburton. The very fact of the fellow's wearing a strange cloak like that, when he went to get rid of the cheque, must be proof positive of Halliburton's guilt.'

'So I think,' acquiesced Mr. Dare.

'What sort of a cloak is this that you laugh at, and call scarce?' inquired the governess.

'The greatest scarecrow of a thing you can conceive, mademoiselle,' responded Mr. Dare. 'I had the pleasure of seeing it to-day on Halliburton. It is a dark green-and-blue Scotch plaid,

made very full, with a turned up collar lined with red, and a bit of fur edging it.'

'Plaid? Plaid?' repeated mademoiselle.—'Why, it must be——'

'What?' asked Mr. Dare, for she had stopped.

'It must be very ugly,' concluded she. But somehow Mr. Dare took an impression into his mind that it was not what she had been about to say.

'What is it that Delves says about the cloaks?' eagerly questioned Cyril. 'I cannot make out.'

'Delves says he knows who it is that owns the other; and that it was the other which went to change the cheque at White's.'

'What mysterious words, papa!' cried Adelaide. 'The cloak went to change the cheque!'

'They were Delves's own words,' replied Mr. Dare. 'He did seem remarkably mysterious over it.'

'Is he going to hunt up the other cloak?' resumed Cyril.

'I conclude so. He was pondering over it for some time before he could remember who it was that he had seen wear a similar cloak. When the recollection came to him, he started up with surprise. Keen men are these police-officers!' added Mr. Dare. 'They forget nothing.'

'And they ferret out everything,' said Herbert, with some testiness in his tone. 'Instead of wasting time over vain speculations touching

cloaks, why does not he secure Halliburton? It is impossible that the other cloak—if there is another—could have had anything to do with the affair.'

'I dropped a note to Delves after he left me, recommending him to follow up the suspicion on Halliburton, whether Mr. Ashley is agreeable or not,' said Mr. Dare. 'I have rarely in my life met with a stronger case of presumptive evidence.'

So, many, besides Mr. Dare, would have felt inclined to say. Herbert, like his father, was firm in the belief that William Halliburton must have taken the money; that it must have been he who paid the visit to the butcher. What Cyril thought may be best inferred from his actions. A sudden fear had come over him, lest Sergeant Delves should really be going to search out the other cloak. A most inconvenient procedure for Cyril, lest, in the process, the sergeant should search out *him*. He laid down his knife and fork. He had had quite enough dinner for one day.

'Are you not hungry, Cyril?' asked his mother.

'I had a monstrous lunch,' answered Cyril. 'I can't eat more now.'

He sat at the table until they had finished, feeling that he was being choked without food, choked with dread. But that a guilty conscience deprives us of free action, he would have quitted the table, and gone about some work he was now eager to do.

He rose when the rest did—looked about for a pair of large scissors, and glided with them up the staircase, his eyes and ears on the alert, lest there should be any watching him. No human being in that house had the slightest knowledge of what Cyril was about to do, or that he was going to do anything; but, to Cyril's guilty conscience, it seemed that all must be on the look-out.

A candle and the scissors in his hand, he stole up to Herbert's chamber, and locked himself in. Inside a closet within the room hung a dark blue camlet cloak, and Cyril took it from the hook. It had a plaid lining: a lining of the precise pattern and colours that the material of William Halliburton's cloak was composed of. The cloak was of the same full, old-fashioned make; its collar was lined with red, tipped with-fur: in short, the one cloak worn on the right side and the other worn on the wrong side, could not have been told apart. This cloak belonged to Herbert Dare; occasionally, though not often, he went out at dusk, wearing it wrong side outermost. It was he, no doubt, whom Sergeant Delves had seen wearing one. He was a little taller than William Halliburton, towering above six feet. What his motive had been, in causing a cloak to be lined, so that, turned, it should resemble William Halliburton's, or whether the so lining it had been accidental, was only known to Herbert himself.

With trembling fingers, and sharp scissors that were not particular where they cut, Cyril began his task—the taking out of this plaid lining. That he had worn it to the butcher's, and that he feared it might tell tales of him, were facts only too apparent. Better put it out of the way for ever! Unpicking, cutting, snipping, Cyril tore away at the lining, and at length got it out, the cloak suffering considerable damage, in the shape of cuts and rents, and loose threads. Hanging the cloak up again, he twisted the lining together.

He was thus engaged when the handle of the door was briskly turned, as if some one essayed to enter, who had not expected to find it fastened. Cyril dashed the lining under the bed and made a spring to the window. To leap out? surely not: for the fall would have killed him. But he had nearly lost all presence of mind in his perplexity and fear.

Another turn at the handle, and the steps went on their way. Cyril thought he recognized them for the housemaid's, Betsy. He supposed she was going her evening round in the chambers. Gathering the lining under his arm, he halted to think. His chest heaved, his hands shook, and his face was white.

What should he do with it—this tell-tale thing? He could not eat it; he dared not burn it. There was no room, of those which had fires, where he might make sure of being alone: and the smell

of it, burning, would alarm the house. What *was* he to do with it?

Dig a hole and bury it, came a prompting voice within him: and Cyril waited for no better suggestion, but crept with it down the stairs, and out to the garden.

Seizing a spade, he dug a hole rapidly in an unfrequented place; and, when it was large enough, thrust the stuff in. Then he covered it over again, to leave the spot apparently as he found it.

'I wish those stars would give a stronger light,' grumbled Cyril, looking up at the dark blue canopy. 'I must come again in the morning, I suppose, and see that it's all safe. It wouldn't do to bring a lantern.'

Now, it happened that Mr. Herbert Dare was bound on a private errand that evening. His intention was to go abroad in his cloak, while he executed it. Just about the time that Cyril was putting the finishing touch to the hole, Herbert went up to his room to get the cloak.

To get the cloak, indeed! When Herbert opened the closet door, nothing save the mutilated object, just described, met his eye. A torn, cut thing, the threads hanging from it in jags. Nothing could exceed Herbert's consternation as he stared at it. He thought he must be in a dream. *Was* it his cloak? Just before dinner, when he came up to wash his hands, he had seen

his cloak hanging there, perfect. He shook it, he pulled it, he peered at it. His cloak it certainly was; but who had destroyed it? A suspicion flashed into his mind that it might be the governess. He made but few steps to the school-room, carrying the cloak with him.

The governess was sitting there, listless enough. Perhaps she was waiting for him. 'I say, mademoiselle,' he began, 'what on earth have you been doing to my cloak?'

'To your cloak!' responded she. 'What should I have been doing to it?'

'Look here,' he said, spreading it out before her. 'Who or what has done this? It was all right when I went down to dinner.'

She stared at it in astonishment great as Herbert had done, and threw off a volley of surprise in her foreign tongue. But she was a shrewd woman. Ay, never was there a shrewder than Bianca Varsini. Mr. Sergeant Delves was not a bad hand at ferreting out just conclusions; but she would have beaten the sergeant hollow.

'Tenez,' cried she, putting up her forefinger in thought, as she gazed down at the cloak. 'Cyril did this.'

'Cyril!'

She nodded her head. 'You stood it out to me that you did not come in on Saturday evening and go out again between ten and eleven——'

'I did not,' interrupted Herbert. 'I told you truth, but you would not believe me.'

'But this cloak went out. And it was turned the plaid side outwards, and your cap was on, tied down at the ears. Naturally I thought it was you. It must have been Cyril. Do you comprehend?'

'No, I don't,' said Herbert. 'How mysteriously you are speaking!'

'It must have been Cyril who robbed Mr. Ashley.'

'Mademoiselle!' interrupted Herbert, indignantly.

'Ecoutez, mon ami. He was blanched as white as a mouchoire, while your father spoke of it at dinner—and did you see that he could not eat? "You look guilty, Monsieur Cyril," I said to myself, not really thinking him to be so. But, be persuaded it was no other. He must have taken the paper-money—or what you call it—and come home here for your cloak and cap to wear, while he changed it for gold, thinking it would fall on that other one who wears the cloak; that William Hal—— I cannot say the name; c'est trop dur pour les lèvres. It is Cyril, and no other. He has turned afraid now, and has torn the lining out.'

Herbert could make no rejoinder at first, partly through dismay, partly through astonishment. 'It cannot have been Cyril!' he reiterated.

'I say it is Cyril,' persisted the young lady. 'I saw him creep up the stairs after dinner, with a candle and your mother's great large scissors in his hand. He did not see me. I was in the dark, looking out of my room. Depend he was going to do it then.'

'Then, of all blind idiots, Cyril's the worst!—if he did take the cheque,' uttered Herbert. 'Should it get known, he is done for; and that, for life. And my father helping to fan the flame!'

The governess shrugged her shoulders. 'I not like Cyril,' she said. 'I have never liked him since I came.'

'But you will not tell against him!' cried Herbert, in fear.

'No, no, no. Tell against your brother! Why should I? It is no concern of mine. Unless people meddle with me, I don't meddle with them. Cyril is safe, for me.'

'What on earth am I to do for my cloak to-night?' debated Herbert. 'I was going—going where I want it.'

'Why you want it so to-night?' asked mademoiselle, sharply.

'Because it's cold,' responded Herbert. 'The cloak was warmer than my over-coat is.'

'Last night you go out, to-night you go out, to-morrow you go out, It is always so now!'

'I have got a lot of perplexing business upon

me,' answered Herbert. 'I have no time to see about it in the day.'

Some little time longer he remained talking with her, partially disputing. The Italian, from some cause or other, went into an ill-humour, and said some provoking things. Herbert, it must be confessed, received them with good temper, and she grew more affable. When he left her, she offered to pick the loose threads out of the cloak, and hem up the bottom.

'You'll lock the door while you do it?' he urged.

'I will take it to my chamber,' she said. 'Nobody will molest me there.'

Herbert left it with her, and went out. Cyril went out. Anthony had already gone out. Mr. Dare remained at home. He and his wife were conversing over the dining-room fire, in the course of the evening, when Joseph came in.

'You are wanted, please, sir,' he said to his master.

'Who wants me?' asked Mr. Dare.

'It's policeman Delves, sir.'

'Oh, show him in here,' said Mr. Dare. 'I hope something will be done in this,' he added to his wife. 'It may turn out a good slice of luck for me.'

Sergeant Delves came in. In point of fact, he had just returned from that interview with the butcher, where he had been accompanied by Mr. Ashley and William.

'Well, Delves? did you get my note?' asked Mr. Dare.

'Yes, sir, I did,' said the sergeant, taking the seat offered him. 'It's what I have come up about.'

'Do you intend to act upon my advice?'

'Why—no, I think not,' replied the sergeant. 'Not, at any rate, until I have had a talk with you.'

'What will you take?'

'Well, sir, the night's cold. I don't mind a sup of brandy-and-water.'

The brandy-and-water was brought, and Mr. Dare joined his visitor in partaking of it. He agreed with him that the night was cold. But nothing could Mr. Dare make of him. So often as he turned the conversation on the subject in hand, so often did the sergeant turn it off again. Mrs. Dare got tired of listening to nothing; and she departed, leaving them together.

Then changed the manner of Sergeant Delves. He drew his chair forward; and bent towards Mr. Dare.

'You have been urging me to go against young Halliburton,' he began. 'It won't do. Halliburton no more fingered that cheque, nor had anything to do with it, than you or me had. Mr. Dare, don't you stir in this matter any further.'

'My present intention is to stir it to the bottom,' returned Mr. Dare.

'Look here,' said the sergeant in an under tone; 'I am not obligated to take notice of offences that don't come legally in my way. Many a thing has been done in this town—ay, and is being done now—that I am obliged to wink at: it don't lay right in my duty to take notice of it, so I keep my eyes shut. Now that's just it in this case. So long as the parties concerned, Mr. Ashley, or White, don't put it into my hands officially, I'm not obligated to take so-and-so into custody, or to act upon my own suspicions. And I won't do it upon suspicions of my own: I promise it. If I am forced, that's another matter.'

'Are you alluding to Halliburton?'

'No. You are on the wrong scent, I say.'

'And you think you are on the right one?'

'I could put my finger out this night and lay it on the fox. But I tell you, sir, I don't want to, unless I am compelled. Don't *you* compel me, Mr. Dare, of all the people in the world.'

Mr. Dare leaned back in his chair, his thumbs in his waistcoat arm-holes. No suspicion of the truth had come across him, and he could not understand either the sergeant or his manner. The latter rose to depart.

'The other cloak, similar to young Halliburton's, belongs to your son Herbert,' he whispered, as he passed Mr. Dare. 'It was his brother, Cyril, who wore it on Saturday night, and who changed the cheque: therefore we may give a guess as to who

took the cheque out of Mr. Ashley's desk. Now you will be still over it, sir, for his sake, as I shall be. If I can, I'll call at your office to-morrow, Mr. Dare, and talk further. White must have the money refunded to him, or *he* won't be still.'

Anthony Dare fell into a confused maze of horror and consternation, leaving the sergeant to bow himself out. Mrs. Dare heard the departure, and returned to the room.

'Well,' cried she, briskly, 'is he going to accuse Halliburton?'

Mr. Dare did not answer. He looked up in a beseeching, helpless sort of manner, like one who is stunned by a blow.

'What is the matter?' she questioned, looking at him closely. 'Are you ill?'

He rose up shaking, as if a trembling fit were on him. 'No—no.'

'Perhaps you are cold,' said Mrs. Dare. 'I asked you what Delves was going to do. Will he accuse Halliburton?'

'Be still!' sharply cried Mr. Dare, in a tone of pain. 'The matter is to be hushed up. It was not Halliburton.'

CHAPTER XXI.

A PRESENT OF TEA-LEAVES.

How went on Honey Fair? Better and worse, better and worse, according to custom; the worse prevailing over the better.

Of all its inhabitants, none had advanced so well as Robert East. Honestly to confess it, that is not saying much; since the greater portion, instead of advancing in the world's social scale, had retrograded. Robert had quitted the manufactory he had worked for, and was now second foreman at Mr. Ashley's. He was also becoming, through self-perseverance, an excellent scholar in a plain way. He had had one friend to help him; and that was William Halliburton.

The Easts had removed to a better house; one of those which had a garden in front of it. No garden was more fragrant than theirs; and it was entirely kept in order by Robert and Thomas East. The house was larger than they required, and part of it was occupied by Stephen Crouch and his daughter. It was known that the Easts were putting by money; and Honey Fair won-

dered: for none lived more comfortably, more respectably. Honey Fair—taking it as a whole—lived neither comfortably nor respectably. The Fishers had never come out of the workhouse, and Joe was dead. The Crosses, turned from their home, their furniture sold, had found lodgings; two rooms. Improvident as ever, were they. They strove not to rise, even to their former condition; but grovelled on, living from hand to mouth. The Masons, man and wife, passed their time agreeably in quarrels. At least, that it was agreeable, may be assumed, for the quarrels were going on perpetually. Now and then they were diversified by a fight. The children were growing up without training; and Caroline—ah! I don't know that it's of much good asking after her. Caroline, years ago, had taken a step sideways; and, try as she would, she could not regain her footing. She lived in a garret alone. She had so lived a long while; and she worked her fingers to the bone, to keep body and soul together, and went about with her head down. Honey Fair looked askance at her, and gathered up its petticoats when they saw her coming, like you saw Eliza Tyrrett snatch up hers, lest they should come in contact with those scanty ones. The Carters thrived; the Brumms also, better than they used to do; and the Buffles so excellently, that a joke went about that they would be retiring on their fortune: but the greater

portion of Honey Fair was full of scuffle, trouble, and improvidence.

William Halliburton frequently found himself in Honey Fair. It was the most direct road from his house to that of Monsieur Colin, the French master. William, sociably inclined by nature, had sometimes dropped in at one or other of the houses. He would find Robert East labouring at his books much more than he need have laboured, had some little assistance been afforded him in his progress. William good-naturedly undertook to supply it. It became quite a common thing for him to go round, and pass an hour with the Easts and Stephen Crouch.

The unpleasant social features of Honey Fair thus obtruded themselves on William Halliburton's notice; it was impossible that anybody, passing much through Honey Fair, should not be struck with them. Could nothing be done to rescue the people from this debased condition?—and a debased one it was, compared with what it might have been. Young and inexperienced as he was, it was a question that sometimes rose to William's mind. Dirty homes, scolding mothers, ragged and pining children, rough and swearing husbands! Waste, discomfort, evil. The women laid the blame on the men: they reproached them with 'sotting' away their evenings and their money at the public-house. The men retorted upon the women, and said they had not a

home fit for 'a pig to come into.' Meanwhile the money, whether earned by husband or wife, *went*. It went somehow, bringing apparently nothing to show for it, and the least possible return of equivalent good. Thus they struggled and squabbled on, their lives little better than one continuous scene of scramble, discomfort, and toil. At a year's end they were not in the least bettered, not in the least raised, whether socially, morally, or physically, from what their condition had been at the year's beginning. Nothing had been achieved; save that they were one year nearer to the great barrier which separates time from eternity.

Ask them what they were toiling and struggling for. They did not know. What was their end, their aim? They had none. If they could only rub on, and keep body and soul together (like poor Caroline Mason was trying to do in her garret), it appeared to be all they cared for. They did not endeavour to lift up their hopes or their aspirations above that; they were willing so to go on until death should come. What a life! what an end!

A feeling would now and then come over William, that he might in some way help them to attempt better things. To do so was a duty which seemed to be lying across his path, that he might pick it up and make it his. How to set about it, he knew no more than the man in the

moon. Now and then disheartening moments would come upon him. To attempt to put the renovating broom to the evils of Honey Fair, appeared a far more formidable task than the cleansing of the stables of Augeas could ever have appeared to Hercules. He knew that any endeavour, whether on his part or on that of others, who might be far more experienced and capable than he, would be utterly fruitless, unless the spring to exertion, to strive to do better, should be first born within themselves. Ah, my friends! the exerting aid of others may be looked upon as a great thing; but without self-struggle and self-help, little good will be effected.

One evening, in passing the house partially occupied by the Crosses, the door was flung violently open, a girl of fifteen flew shrieking out, and a saucer of wet tea-leaves came flying after her. The tea-leaves alighted on the girl's neck, just escaping the arm of William. It was the youngest girl of the family, Patty. The tea-leaves had come from Mrs. Cross. Her face was red with passion, her tongue loud with it; the girl, on her part, was insultingly insolent and abusive. Mrs. Cross had her hands stretched out, to scratch, or tear, or pull hair, as might be convenient, and a personal skirmish would inevitably have ensued, but for the accident of William's being there. He received the hands upon his arm, and contrived to detain them there.

'What's the matter, Mrs. Cross?'

'Matter!' raved Mrs. Cross. 'She's a idle, impedent, wicked huzzy—that's what's the matter. She knows I've got my gloving to get in for Saturday, and not a stroke'll she help. There be the tater dishes a lying dirty from dinner, there be the tea-cups a lying from tea, and touch 'em she won't. She expects me to do it, she do, and me with my gloving to find 'em in food! I took hold of her arm to make her do it, and she turned and struck at me, she did, the good-for-nothing faggot! I hope none on it didn't go on you, sir,' added Mrs. Cross, somewhat modifying her voice, and stopping to recover breath.

'Better that it had gone on my coat than on Patty's neck,' replied he, in a good-natured, half joking tone; though, indeed, the girl, with her evil look at her mother, her insolent air, stood there scarcely worth his defence. 'If my mother asked me to wash tea-things or do anything else, Patty, I should do it, and think it a pleasure to help her,' he added, to the girl.

Patty pushed her hanging hair behind her ears, and turned a defying look upon her mother. Hidden, as she had thought it was, from William, he saw it.

'You just wait,' nodded Mrs. Cross, in answer as defiant. 'I'll make your back smart, by-and-by.'

Which of the two was the more in fault? It

was hard to say. The girl had never been brought up to know her duty, or to do it: the mother, from her earliest childhood, had given abuse and blows; no persuasive, kind words; no training. Little wonder, now Patty was growing up, that she turned again. It was the usual mode of maternal government throughout Honey Fair. In these, and such like cases, where could interference or counsel avail, unless the spirit of the mothers and the daughters could be changed?

William walked on, after the little episode of the tea-leaves. He could not help contrasting these homes with his home; their life with his life. He was addicted to reflection beyond his years, and he wished these people could be aroused to somewhat of improvement both in mind and body. They were *so* living for no end; they were toiling only to satisfy the wants of the day—nay, to stop the wants, more than to satisfy them, How many of them were so much as thinking of another world? Their turmoil in this was too great, for them to cast a thought to the next.

'I wonder,' mused William, as he stepped towards M. Colin's, 'whether some of the better conducted of the men might not be induced to come round to East's in an evening? It might be a beginning, at any rate. Once wean the men from the public-houses, and there's no knowing what reform might be effected. I would willingly give an hour or two of my evenings up to them!'

His visit to M. Colin over, he retraced his steps to Honey Fair, and turned into Robert East's. It was past eight then. Robert and Stephen Crouch were home from work, and were getting out their books. Charlotte sat by, at work as usual, and Tom East was pulling Charlotte's head towards him, to whisper something to her.

'Robert,' said William, speaking impulsively, the moment he entered, 'I wonder whether you could induce a few of your neighbours to come here of an evening?'

'What for, sir?' asked Robert, turning round from the book-shelves where he stood, searching for some book.

'It might be so much better for them. It might end in being so. I wish,' he added, with sudden warmth, 'we could get all Honey Fair here!'

'All Honey Fair!' echoed Stephen Crouch, in astonishment.

'I mean what I say, Crouch.'

'Why, sir, the room wouldn't hold them! Nor a quarter of them; nor a tenth!'

William laughed. 'No, that it would not, speaking practically. There is so much discomfort around us, and—and ill-doing—I must call it so, for want of a better name—that I sometimes wish we could mend it a little.'

'Who mend it, sir?'

'Anybody that would try. You two'—address-

ing both the men collectively—'might help towards it. If you could seduce a few round here, and get them to be interested in what lies your evening interest—books, and rational conversation—so as to wean them from the public-houses, it would be a great thing.'

'There'd never be any good done with the men, take them as a whole, sir. They are an ignorant, easy-going lot, not caring to be better.'

'That's just it, Crouch. They don't care to be better. But they might be taught to care. It would be a most desirable thing if Honey Fair could be brought to spend its evenings as you spend yours. If the men gave up spending their money, and reeling home after it; and the women kept tidy hearths and civil tongues. As Charlotte does,' he added, looking round at her.

'There's no denying that, sir.'

'I think something might be done. By degrees, you understand; not in a hurry. Were you to take the men by storm—to say, "We want you to lead changed lives, and are going to show you how to do it," you would make your movement for nothing, and get laughed at into the bargain. Say to the men, "You shan't go to the public-house, because you waste your time, your money, and your temper," and, rely upon it, it would have the same effect as if you spoke to the wind. But get them to come here as a sort of agreeable change, an invitation out, if you can understand

that, and you may secure them for good, if you make the evenings pleasant to them. In short, give them some employment or attraction that will outweigh the attractions of the public-house.'

'It would be a good thing,' said Stephen Crouch, musingly. 'They might be for trying to rise up of themselves then.'

'Ay,' spoke William, with enthusiasm. 'Once let them find the day-spring within themselves, the wish to do right, to be elevated above what they now are, and the rest will be easy. When once that day-spring can be found, a man is made. God never sent a man here, but he implanted that within him. The difficulty is, to awaken it.'

'And it is not always done, sir,' said Charlotte, lifting her face from her work with a kindling eye, a heightened colour. *She* had found it.

'Charlotte, I fear it is rarely done, instead of always. It lies pretty dormant, to judge by appearances, in Honey Fair.'

William was right. It is an epoch in a man's life, the finding what he had not inaptly called the day-spring. Self-esteem, self-reliance, the courage of long-continued patience, the striving to make the best of the mind's good gifts—all are born of it. He who possesses it may soar to a bright and a happy lot, bearing in mind—may he always bear it!—the rest and reward promised hereafter.

'At any rate, it would be giving them a chance,

as it seems to me,' observed William. 'I think I know one who would come. Andrew Brumm.'

'Ah, *he* would, and glad,' replied Robert East. 'He is different from many of them. I know another that would, sir; and that's Adam Thornycroft.'

Charlotte buried her head over her work.

'Since that cousin, of his, died of *delirium tremens*, Thornycroft has said good-bye to the public-houses. He spends his evenings at home with his mother; but I know he would like to spend them here. Tim Carter would come, sir.'

'If Mrs. Tim will let him,' put in Tom East, saucily. And there was a laugh round.

'Ever so few, to begin with, will set the example to others,' remarked William. 'There's no knowing what it may grow to. Small beginnings make great endings. I have talked with my mother about Honey Fair. She has always said: "Before Honey Fair's conduct will be better, its minds must be better."'

'There will be the women yet, sir,' spoke Charlotte. 'If they are to stop as they are, it will be of little use the men's doing anything for themselves.'

'Charlotte, I say there's no knowing where the work may end, once begun,' he gravely answered.

The rain, which had been threatening all the evening, was coming down pretty smartly as William walked through Honey Fair on his

return. Standing against a shutter near his own door, was Jacob Cross. 'Good night, Jacob,' said William.

'Good night, sir,' answered Jacob, his air a sullen one.

'Are you standing in the rain to make you grow, as the children say?' asked William, in his ever-pleasant tone.

'I'm a-standing here 'cause I have got nowhere else to stand,' said the man, his voice full of resentment. 'I be turned out of our room; and I have got no money for the Horned Ram.'

'A good thing you have not,' thought William. 'What has turned you from your room?' he asked.

'I be turned out, sir, by the row there is in it. Our Mary Ann's come home.'

'Mary Ann?' repeated William, not quite understanding.

'Our Mary Ann, what took and married Ben Tyrrett. A fine market she have brought her pigs to!'

'What has she done?' questioned William.

'She have done enough,' wrathfully answered Cross. 'We told her when she married Tyrrett that he was nothing but a jobber, at fifteen shilling a-week—which it's all he was, sir, as you know. "Wait," I says to her, "somebody better nor him'll turn up." Her mother says "wait." Others says "wait." No, not she; the girls be all marrying mad. Well, she took her own way;

she would take it; and they got married, and set up upon nothing. Neither of 'em had saved a twopenny piece; and Ben, him fond of the public; and our Mary Ann, her fond of laziness and finery, and not knowing how to keep house no more nor her young sister Patty did.'

William remembered the little interlude of that evening in which Miss Patty had played her part. Jacob continued—

'It was all fine and sunshiny with 'em for a few days or a few weeks, till the novelty wears off; and then they finds things going cranky. The money, *that* begins to run short; and Mary Ann, she finds that Ben likes his glass; and Ben, he finds that she's just a doll, with no gumption nor management inside of her. They quarrels—naterally; and they comes to us to settle it. "You was both red-hot for the bargain," says I, "and you must just make the best of it, and of one another." And so they went back: and it have gone on till this, quarrelling continual. And now he have took to beat her, and home she have come to-night, not half an hour ago, with her three children and a black eye, a-vowing as she'll stop at home, and won't go back to him again. And she and her mother's having words over it, and the babbies is a squalling—enough, the noise is, to raise the ceiling off, and I come away out of it. I wish I was dead, I do!'

Jacob's account of the noise was scarcely exag-

gerated. It penetrated to where they stood, two or three houses off. William had moved closer, that the umbrella might give Cross part of its shelter. 'Not a very sensible wish that of yours, is it, Cross?' remarked he.

'I have wished it long, sir, sensible or not sensible. I slaves away my days, and have got nothing but a pigsty to step into at home, and angry words in it. A nice place, that is, for a tired man! I can't afford the public more nor three or four nights in a week; not that, always. They be getting corky at the beer-shops, now-a-days, and won't give no trust. Wednesday this is; Thursday, to-morrow; Friday, next night; three nights, and me without a shelter to put my head in!'

'I should like to take you to one to-morrow night,' said William. 'Will you go with me?'

'Where's it to?' ungraciously asked Cross.

'To Robert East's. You know how he and Crouch spend their evenings. There's always something going on there interesting and pleasant.'

'Crouch and East don't want me.'

'Yes, they do. They will be only too glad if you, and a few more intelligent men, will join them. Try it, Cross. There's a warm room to sit in, at all events, and nothing to pay.'

'Ah, it's all very fine for them Easts! We don't have their luck. Look at me! Down in the world.'

William put his hand on the man's shoulder. 'Why should you be down in the world?'

'Why should I!' repeated Cross, in surprise. 'Because I be,' he logically answered.

'That is not the reason. The reason is, because you do not try to rise.'

'It's no use trying.'

'Have you ever tried?'

'Why, no! How can I try?'

'You wished just now that you were dead. Would it not be better to wish to live?'

'Not such a life as mine.'

'But, to wish to live, would seem to imply that it must be a better life. And why need your life be so miserable? You gain fair wages; your wife earns money. Altogether I suppose you must have twenty-six or twenty-eight shillings per week——'

'But there's no thrift with it,' burst forth Cross. 'It melts away somehow. Afore the middle of the week comes, it's all gone.'

'You spend some at the Horned Ram, you know,' said William, not in a reproving tone, but a joking one.

'She squanders away in rubbish more than that,' was Jacob's answer—with a turn of his thumb towards his house, and not at all an honourable stress upon the 'she.'

'And get nothing satisfactory to show for, in return, either of you. Try another plan, Jacob.'

'I'd not be back'ard—if I could see one to try,' said he, after a pause.

'You be here at half-past eight to-morrow evening, and I will go in with you to East's. If you cannot see any better way, you can spend a pleasant evening. But now, Jacob, let me say a word to you, and do you note it. If you do find the evening pass agreeably, go the next evening, and the next; go always. You can't tell all that may arise from it, in time. I know of one thing that will.'

'What's that, sir?'

'Why, that instead of wishing yourself dead, you will get to think life short, for the good you find in it.'

He went on his way. Jacob Cross, deprived of the umbrella's shelter, stood in the rain as before, and looked after him, indulging his reflections.

'He is a young man, and things wears their bright side to him. But 'he have got a cordial way with him, and don't look at folks as if they was dirt.'

And that had been the origin of the holding *soirées* at Robert East's. By degrees ten or a dozen men took to go, and—what was more—to like to go, and to find an interest in it. It was a vast improvement upon the Horned Ram.

CHAPTER XXII.

HENRY ASHLEY'S OBJECT IN LIFE.

On one of the warm bright days that we sometimes get in the month of February, all the more bright from their contrast to the passing winter, William Halliburton was walking home to tea from the manufactory, and overtook Henry Ashley limping along. Henry was below the middle height, and slight in form, with the same beautiful face that had marked his boyhood, delicately refined in feature, bright in colour; the same two upright lines of pain, knit in the smooth white brow.

'Just the man I wanted,' said he, linking his arm within William's. 'You are a good help up a hill, and I am tired and hot.'

'Wrapped up in that coat, with its fur lining, I should think you are! I have doffed my elegant cloak, you see, to-day.'

'Is it off to the British Museum?'

William laughed. 'I have not had time to pack it.'

'I am glad I met with you. You must come

home to tea with me. Well? Why are you hesitating? You have no engagement?'

'Nothing more than usual. My studies——'

'You are study mad!' interrupted Henry Ashley. 'What do you want to be? A Socrates? An Admirable Crichton?'

'Nothing so formidable. I want to be a useful man.'

'And you make yourself an accomplished one, as a preliminary step. Mary took up the fencing-sticks for you yesterday. Herbert Dare was at our house—some freak is taking him to be a pretty constant visitor just now—and the talk turned upon Frank. You know,' broke off Henry in his quaint way, 'I never use long words when short ones will serve: you learned ones would say "conversation." Mr. Keating had said to my father that Frank Halliburton was a brilliant scholar, and I retailed it over to Herbert. I knew it would put him up, and there's nothing I like half so much as to *rile* the Dares. Herbert sneered. "And he owes it partly to William," I went on, "for if Frank's a brilliant scholar, William's a brilliant*er*!" "William Halliburton a brilliant scholar!" stormed scornful Herbert. "Has he learnt to be one in the egg-tub? So long as he knows how gloves are made, that's enough for him. What does *he* want with the acquirements of gentlemen?" Up looked Miss Mary; her colour rising, her eyes flashing. She was at her drawing:

at which, by the way, she makes a poor hand; nothing to be compared to Anna Lynn. "William Halliburton has forgotten more than you ever learnt, Herbert Dare," cried she; "and there's more of the true gentleman in his little finger than there is in your whole body." "There's for you, Herbert Dare," whistled I; "but it's true, lad, like it or not as you may!" Herbert *was* riled.'

Henry turned his head as he concluded, and looked up at William. A gleam of light like a sunbeam had flashed into William's eyes; a tingling red to his cheeks.

'Well?' cried Henry, sharply, for William did not speak. 'Have you nothing to say?'

'It was generous of Miss Ashley.'

'I don't mean to that. Oh dear!' sighed Henry, who appeared to be in one of his fitful moods; 'who is to know whether things will turn out crooked or straight in this world of ours? What objection have you to coming home with me for the evening? That's what I mean.'

'None. I can give up my books for a night, bookworm as you think me. But they will expect me at East's.'

'Happy the man that expecteth nothing!' responded Henry. 'Disappoint them.'

'"As for disappointing them, I shouldn't so much mind, but I can't abide to disappoint myself,"' returned William, quoting from Goldsmith s

good old play, of which both he and Henry were fond.

'You don't mean to say it would be a disappointment to *you*, the not giving the lesson, or whatever it is, to those working chaps!' uttered Henry Ashley.

'Not as you would count disappointment. When I do not get round for an hour, it seems like a night lost. I know the men like to see me; and I am always fearing that we are not sure of them.'

'You speak as though your whole soul were in the business,' returned Henry Ashley.

'I think my heart is in it.'

Henry looked at him wistfully, and his tone grew serious. 'William, I would give all I am worth, present, and to come, to change places with you.'

'To change places with me!' echoed William, in very surprise.

'Yes: for you have an object in life. You may have many. To be useful in your generation is one.'

'And so may you have objects in life.'

'With this encumbrance!' He stamped his lame leg, and a look of keen vexation settled itself in his face. 'You can go forth into the world with your strong limbs, your unbroken health; you can work, or you can play; you can be active, or you can be still, at will. But what am I? A poor weak creature; infirm of temper,

tortured by pain, condemned half my days to the monotony of a sick room. Compare my lot with yours!'

'There are those who would *choose* your lot in preference to mine, were the option given them,' returned William. 'I must work. It is a duty laid upon me. You can play.'

'Thank you! How?'

'I am not speaking literally. Every good and pleasing thing that money can purchase is at your command. You have but to enjoy them, so far as you may. One, suffering as you do, bears not upon him the responsibility to *use* his time, that a healthy man does. Lots, in this world, Henry, are, as I believe, pretty equally balanced. Many would envy you your calm life of repose.'

'It is not calm,' was the abrupt rejoinder. 'It is disturbed by pain, and aggravated by temper; and—and—tormented by uncertainty.'

'At any rate, you can subdue the one.'

'Which, pray?'

'The temper. Henry'—dropping his voice—'a victory over your own temper may be one of the few obligations laid upon you.'

'I wish I could live for an object,' grumbled Henry.

'Come round with me to East's sometimes.'

'I—dare say!' retorted Henry, when he could find his amazed tongue. 'Thank you again, Mr. Halliburton.'

William laughed. But he soon resumed his seriousness. 'I can understand that, for you, the favoured son of Mr. Ashley, reared in your refinement and exclusiveness——'

'Enshrined in pride—the failing that Helstonleigh is pleased to call my besetting sin; sheltered under care and coddling so great, that the very winds of heaven are not suffered to visit my face too roughly!' was the impetuous interruption of Henry Ashley. 'Come! bring it all out. Don't, from motives of delicacy, keep in any of my faults, or virtues, or advantages!'

'I can understand, I say, why you are unwilling to break through the reserve of your home habits,' William calmly continued. 'But, if you did so, you might no longer have to complain of the want of an object to live for.'

At this moment they came in view of William's home. Mrs. Halliburton happened to be at one of the windows. William nodded his greeting, and Henry raised his hat. Presently Henry began again:

'Pray, do you join the town in its gratuitous opinion, that Henry Ashley, of all in it, is the proudest amid the proud?'

'I do not find you proud,' said William.

'You! As far as you and I are concerned, comparatively, I think the boot might be upon the other leg. You might set up for proud over me.'

William could not help laughing. 'Putting

joking aside, my opinion is, Henry, that your shyness and sensitiveness are in fault; not your pride. It is your reserve of manner alone, which has caused Helstonleigh to take up the impression that you are unduly proud.'

'Right, old fellow!' returned Henry in an emphatic tone. 'If you knew how far I and pride stand apart—but let it pass.'

Arrived at the entrance to Mr. Ashley's, William threw open the gate for Henry, retreating himself. 'I must go home first, Henry. I won't be a quarter of an hour.'

Henry looked cross. 'Why on earth, then, did you not go in as we passed? What was the use of your coming up here, to go back again?'

'I thought my arm was helping you.'

'So it was. But—there! don't be an hour.'

As William walked rapidly back, he met the carriage of Mrs. Ashley. She and Mary were inside. Mrs. Ashley nodded as he raised his hat, and Mary glanced at him with a smile and a heightened colour. She had grown up to excessive beauty.

A few moments, and William met beauty of another style—Anna Lynn. Her cheeks were the same flushed, dimpled cheeks of her childhood; the same shy blue eyes gleaming from between their long dark lashes; the same profusion of silky brown hair; the same gentle, sweetly modest manners. William stopped to shake hands with her.

'Out alone, Anna?'

'I am on my way to take tea with Mary Ashley.'

'Are you? We shall meet there, then.'

'That will be pleasant. Fare thee well, for the present, William.'

She continued her way. William ran in home, and up to his chamber. Dressing himself hastily, he went to the room where his mother sat, and stood before her.

'Does my coat fit, mother?'

'Why, where are you going?' she asked.

'To Mrs. Ashley's. I have put on my new coat. Does it fit? It seems easy'—throwing up his arms.

'Yes, it fits. I think you are getting a dandy. Go along. I must not look at you too long.'

'Why not?' he asked in surprise.

'Lest I grow proud of my eldest son. And I would rather be proud of his goodness than his looks.'

William, laughing, gave his mother a farewell kiss. 'Tell Gar I am sorry he will not have me at his elbow this evening, to find fault with his Greek. Good-bye, mother dear.'

In truth, there was something remarkably noble in the appearance of William Halliburton. As he entered Mrs. Ashley's drawing-room, the fact seemed to strike upon Henry with unusual force, who greeted him from his distant sofa.

'So, that's what you went back for!—to make yourself look like a buck!' he called out as William approached him. 'As if you were not well enough before! Did you dress for me, pray?'

'For you!' laughed William. 'That's good!'

'In saying "me," I include the family lot,' returned Henry, quaintly. 'There's nobody else to dress for.'

'Yes, there is. There's Anna Lynn.'

Now, in good truth, William had no covert meaning in giving this answer. The words rose to his lips, and he spoke them lightly. Perhaps he could have given a very different one, had he been compelled to speak out the inmost feeling of his heart. Strange, however, was the effect on Henry Ashley. He grasped William's arm with emotion, and pulled his face over him as he lay.

'What do you say? What do you mean?'

'I mean nothing particular. Anna *is* here.'

'You shall not evade me,' gasped Henry. 'I must have it out, now or later. WHAT is it that you mean?'

William stood, almost confounded. Henry was evidently in painful excitement; every vestige of colour had forsaken his sensitive countenance, and his white hands shook as they held William.

'What do *you* mean?' William whispered. 'I

said nothing to agitate you thus, that I am aware of. Are we at cross purposes?'

A bright spot, bright as any carmine, began to flush into the invalid's pale cheeks, and he moved his face so that the light did not fall upon it.

'I'll have it out, I say. What is Anna Lynn to you?'

'Nothing,' answered William, a smile parting his lips.

'What is she to you?' reiterated Henry, his tone painfully earnest.

William edged himself on to the sofa, so as to cover Henry from the gaze of any eyes that might be directed to him from the other part of the room. 'I like Anna very much,' he said, in a clear, low tone; 'almost as I might like a sister; but I have no love for her, in the sense you would imply — if I am not mistaking your meaning. And I never shall have.'

Henry looked at him wistfully, 'On your honour?'

'Henry! was there need to ask it? On my honour, if you will.'

'No, no; there was no need: you are always truthful. Bear with me, William! bear with my infirmities.'

'My sister, Anna Lynn might be, and welcome. My wife, never.'

Henry did not answer. His face was growing damp with physical pain.

'You have one of your spasms of suffering coming on!' breathed William. 'Shall I get you anything?'

'Hush! Only sit there, to hide me from them: and be still.'

William did as he was requested, sitting so as to screen him from Mrs. Ashley and the rest. He held his hands, and the paroxysm, sharp while it lasted, passed away. Henry's very lips had grown white with pain.

'You see what a poor wretch I am!'

'I see that you suffer,' was William's compassionate answer.

'From henceforth there is a fresh bond of union between us, for you possess my secret. It is what no one else in the world does. William, *that's* my object in life.'

William did not reply. Perplexity was crowding on his mind, shading his countenance.

'Well!' cried Henry, beginning to recover his equanimity, and with it his sharp retorts. 'What are you looking blue at?'

'Will it be smooth sailing for you, Henry, with Mr. Ashley?'

'Yes, I think it will,' was the hasty rejoinder: its very haste, its fractious tone, proving that Henry was by no means so sure as he would imply. 'I am not as others are: therefore he will let minor considerations yield to my happiness.'

William looked uncommonly grave. 'Mr.

Ashley is not all,' he said, arousing from a reverie. 'There may be difficulties elsewhere. She must not marry out of their own society. Samuel Lynn is one of the strictest members of it.

'Rubbish! Samuel Lynn is my father's servant, and I am my father's son. If Samuel should take a strait-laced fit, and hold out, why, I'll turn broadbrim.'

'Samuel Lynn is my father's servant!' In that very fact, William saw cause to fear that it might not be such plain sailing with Mr. Ashley, as Henry wished to anticipate. He could not help looking the doubts he felt. Henry observed it.

'What's the matter again?' he peevishly asked. 'I do think you were born to be the plague of my life! My belief is, you want her for yourself.'

'I am only anxious for you, Henry. I wish you could have assured yourself that it would go well, before—before allowing your feelings to be irrevocably bound up in it. A blow, for you, might be hard to bear.'

'How could I help my feelings?' retorted Henry. 'I did not fix them purposely on Anna Lynn. Before I knew anything about it, they had fixed themselves. Almost before I knew that I cared for her, she was more to me than the sun in the heavens. There has been no help for it at all, I tell you. So don't preach.'

'Have you spoken to her?'

Henry shook his head. 'The time has not

come. I must make it right with the master before I can stir a step: and I fear it is not quite ripe for that. Mind *you* don't talk.'

William smiled. 'I will mind.'

'You'd better. If that Quaker society got a hint, there's no knowing what hullabaloo they'd make. They might be for reading Anna a public lecture at Meeting: or get Samuel Lynn to vow he'd not give his consent.'

'I should argue in this way, were I you, Henry. With my love so firmly fixed on Anna Lynn——I beg your pardon, Miss Ashley.'

William started up. Mary Ashley was standing close by the sofa. Had she caught the purport of the last words?

'Mamma spoke twice, but you were too busily engaged to hear,' said Mary. 'Henry, James is waiting to wheel your sofa to the tea-table.'

Henry rose. Passing his arm through William's he approached the group. The servant pushed the sofa after them. Standing together were Mary Ashley and Anna. They presented a great contrast. Mary wore an evening dress of glittering silk, its low body trimmed with rich white lace; white lace hanging from its drooping sleeves: and she had on ornaments of gold. Anna was in grey merino, high in the neck, closed at the wrists; not a bit of lace about her, not an ornament; nothing but a plain collar of white linen. 'Catch me letting her wear those Methodistical

things when she shall be mine!' thought Henry. 'I'll make a bonfire of the lot.'

But the Quaker cap? Ah! it was not there. Anna had continued her habit at home of throwing it off, as formerly. Patience reprimanded in vain. She was not seconded by Samuel Lynn. 'We are by ourselves, Patience; it does not much matter,' he would say: 'the child says she is cooler without it.' But had Samuel Lynn surmised that Anna was in the habit of discarding it on every possible occasion when she was from home, he had been as severe as Patience. At Mr. Ashley's, especially, she would sit, as now, without it, her lovely face made more lovely by the aid of its falling curls. Anna did wrong, and she knew that she did it; but she was a wilful girl, and a vain one. That pretty, timid, retiring manner concealed much self-will, much vanity; though in some things she was as easily swayed as a child.

She disobeyed Patience in another matter. Patience would say to her, 'Should Mary Ashley be opening her instrument of music, thee will mind not to listen to her songs: thee can go into another room.'

'Oh, yes, Patience,' she would answer; 'I will mind.'

But, instead of not listening, Miss Anna would place herself close to the piano, and drink in the songs as if her whole heart were in the music.

Music had a great effect upon her: and there she would sit, entranced, as though she were in some bright Elysium. She said nothing of this at home; and the deceit was wrong.

They were sitting down to tea, when Herbert Dare came in. The hours for meals were early at Mr. Ashley's: the medical men deemed it best for Henry. Herbert could be a gentleman when he chose; good-looking also; quite an addition to a drawing-room. He took his seat between Mary and Anna.

'I say, how is it you are not dining at home this evening?' asked Henry, who somehow did not regard the Dares with any great favour.

'I dined in the middle of the day,' was Herbert's reply.

'The condescension! I thought only plebeians did that. James, is there a piece of chalk in the house? I must chalk that up.'

'Henry! Henry!' reproved Mrs. Ashley.

'Oh, let him talk, Mrs. Ashley,' said Herbert, with supreme good humour. 'There's nothing he likes so well as a wordy war.'

'Nothing in the world,' acquiesced Henry. 'Especially with Herbert Dare.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

ATTERLY'S FIELD.

LAUGHING, talking, playing at proverbs, earning and paying forfeits, it was a merry group in Mrs. Ashley's drawing-room. That lady herself was not joining in the merriment. She sat apart at a small table, some work in her hand, speaking a word now and then, and smiling to herself in echo to some unusual bursts of laughter. It was surprising that only five voices could make such a noise. They were sitting in a circle; Mary Ashley between William Halliburton and Herbert Dare, Anna Lynn between Herbert Dare and Henry Ashley, Henry and William side by side.

Time, in these happy moments, passes rapidly. In due course the hands of the French clock on the mantelpiece pointed to half-past eight, and its silver tones rung out the chimes. They were at the end of the game—Herbert Dare standing in a corner, sent there to pay the penalty of the last forfeit—and just settling themselves to commence another. The striking of the half-hour aroused William, and he glanced towards the clock.

'Half-past eight! who would have thought it? I had no idea it was so late. I must leave you just for half an hour,' he added, rising.

'Leave for what?' cried Henry Ashley.

'To go as far as East's. I will not stop.'

Henry broke into a 'wordy war,' as Herbert Dare had phrased it earlier in the evening. William smiled, and overruled him in his quiet way.

'They hold my promise to go round this evening,' he said. 'I gave it them unconditionally. I must just step there to tell them I cannot come —if that's not a contradiction. Don't look so cross, Henry.'

'Of course, you don't mean coming back,' resentfully spoke Henry. 'When you get there, there you'll stop.'

'No; I have told you I will not. But if I let them expect me all the evening, they will be looking and waiting, and do no good.'

He went out as he spoke, and quitted the house. At the front gate, as he reached it, Mr. Ashley was coming in. Mr. Ashley had been to the manufactory; he did not often go after tea. 'Going already, William?' Mr. Ashley exclaimed, in an accent of surprise.

'Not for long, sir. I must just look in at East's.'

'Is that scheme likely to prosper? Can you keep the men?'

'Yes, indeed, I think so. My hopes are strong.'

'Well, there's nothing like hope,' answered Mr. Ashley, with a laugh. 'But I shall wonder if you do keep them. William,' he added, after a slight pause, his tone changing to a business one, 'I have a few words to say to you. I was about speaking to you in the counting-house this afternoon, but something put it aside. I have changed my plans with respect to this Lyons journey. Instead of despatching you, as I had thought of, I believe I shall send Samuel Lynn.'

Mr. Ashley paused. William did not immediately reply.

'Samuel Lynn's experience is greater than yours. It is a new thing, and he will see, better than you could do, what can and what cannot be done.'

'Very well, sir,' at length answered William.

'You speak as though you felt disappointed,' remarked Mr. Ashley.

William did feel disappointed. But his incentive to the feeling lay far deeper than Mr. Ashley supposed. 'I should like to have gone, sir, very much. But—of course my liking, or not liking, has nothing to do with it. Perhaps it is as well that I should not go,' he resumed, more in self-soliloquy, as if he were trying to reconcile himself to the disappointment by argument, than in observation to Mr. Ashley. 'I do not see how the men would have got along without me at East's.'

'Ay, that's a grave consideration,' replied Mr. Ashley, in a joking tone, as he turned to walk to his own door.

William stood still, nailed as it were to the spot, looking after his master. A most unwelcome idea had flashed over him; and in the impulse of the moment he followed Mr. Ashley, speaking it out. Even in the night's obscurity, his emotion was perceptible.

'Mr. Ashley, the suspicion cast on me, at the time that cheque was lost, has not been the cause —the cause of your declining to intrust me with this commission?'

Mr. Ashley looked at him with surprise. But that William's agitation was all too real, causing even his breath to be impeded, his words uneven, he would have laughed at him.

'William, I think you are turning silly. There was no suspicion cast on you.'

'You have never stirred in the matter, sir; you have never spoken to me to tell me you were satisfied that I was not inculpated,' was William's impulsive answer.

'Spoken to you! where was the need? Why, William, my whole life, my daily intercourse with you, is only so much proof that *you* have my full confidence. Should I admit you to my home, to the companionship of my children, if I had no better faith in you than that?'

'True,' said William, beginning to recover him-

self. 'It was a thought that flashed over me, sir, when you said I was not to be sent on the journey. I should not like you to doubt me; I could scarcely live under it.'

'William, you reproached me with not having stirred in——'

'I beg your pardon, sir. I never thought of such a thing as reproach. I would not presume to do it.'

'I have not stirred in the matter,' resumed Mr. Ashley. 'A very disagreeable suspicion arises in my mind at times, as to how the cheque went; and I do not choose to stir in it. Have you any suspicion on the point?'

The question took William by surprise. He stammered in his answer; an unusual thing for him to do. 'N——o.'

'I ask if you have a suspicion,' quietly repeated Mr. Ashley, in a tone of meaning, as if he took William's answer for nothing, or had not heard it.

William spoke out then, readily. 'A suspicion has crossed my mind, sir. But it is one I should not like to impart to you.'

'That's enough. I see. White voluntarily took the loss of the money on himself. He came to me to say so; therefore I infer it has in some private manner been refunded to him. Mr. Dare veered round and advised me not to investigate the affair, as I was no loser; Delves hinted the same; altogether, I can see through the thing pretty clearly,

and I am content to leave it alone. Are you satisfied? If not——'

Mr. Ashley broke off abruptly. William waited.

'So don't turn foolish again. You and I now understand each other. William!' he emphatically added, 'I am getting to like you almost as I do my own children. I am proud of you; and I shall be prouder yet. God bless you, my boy!'

It was so very rare that the calm, dignified Thomas Ashley was betrayed into anything like demonstrativeness, that William could only stand and look. And while he looked, the door closed on his master.

He went away with all his speed, calling in at his home. Were the truth to be told, perhaps William was quite as anxious to be back at Mr. Ashley's, as Henry was that he should be. Scarcely stopping to say a word of greeting, he opened a drawer, took from it a small case of fossils, and then searched for something else; something which apparently he could not find.

'Have any of you seen my microscope?' he asked, turning to the group at the table bending over their books.

Jane looked round. 'My dear, I lent it to Patience to-day. I suppose she forgot to bring it back. Gar, will you go and ask her for it?'

'Don't disturb yourself, Gar,' said William. 'I am going out. I'll ask Patience myself.'

Patience was alone in her parlour. She re-

turned him the microscope, saying the reason she had not sent it in was, that she had not had time to use it. 'Thee art in evening dress!' she remarked to William.

'I am at Mrs. Ashley's. I have only come out for a few minutes. Thank you. Good night, Patience.'

'Wait thee a moment, William. Is Anna ready to come home?'

'No, that she is not. Why?'

'I want to send for her. Samuel Lynn is spending the evening in the town, so I must send Grace. And I don't care to send her late. She will only get talking to John Pembridge, if she goes out after he is home from work.'

William smiled. 'It is natural that she should, I suppose. When are they going to be married?'

'Shortly,' answered Patience, in a tone not quite so equable as usual. Patience saw no good in people getting married in general; and she was vexed at the prospect of losing Grace in particular. 'She leaves us in a fortnight from this,' she continued, alluding to Grace, 'and all her thoughts seem to be bent now upon meeting John Pembridge. Could thee bring Anna home for me?'

'With pleasure,' replied William.

'That is well, then. Grace does not deserve to go out to-night; for she wilfully crossed me to-day. Good evening, William.'

The fossil case in his hand, and the microscope in his pocket, William made the best of his way to Honey Fair. Robert East, Stephen Crouch, Brumm, Thorneycroft, Carter, Cross, and some half dozen others, were crowded round Robert's table. William handed them the fossils and the microscope; told the men to amuse themselves with them for that night, and he would explain more about them on the morrow. He was ever anxious that the men should have some object of amusement as a chief point on these evenings; anything to keep their interest awakened.

Before the half hour had expired, he was back at Mr. Ashley's. The proverbs had been given up, and Mary was at the piano. When William entered, she was singing a duet with Herbert Dare. Anna—disobedient Anna—was seated close, listening with all her ears and heart to the music, her up-turned countenance quite a sight to look upon, in its rapt pleasure.

'I think you could sing,' spoke Henry Ashley to her, in an under tone, after watching her while the song lasted.

Anna shook her head. 'I may not try,' she said, raising her blue eyes to him for one moment, and then dropping them.

'The time may come when you may,' returned Henry, in a deeper whisper.

She made no answer, she did not lift her eyes; but the faintest possible smile parted her rosy lips

—a smile which seemed to express a self-consciousness that perhaps that time might come. And Henry, shy and sensitive, stood apart and gazed upon her, his heart beating.

'Young lady,' said William, advancing, 'do you know that a special honour has been assigned me to-night? One that concerns you.'

Anna raised her eyes fully now. She felt as much at her ease with William as she did with her father or Patience. 'What dost thee say, William? An honour?'

'That of seeing you safely home. I——'

'What's that for?' interrupted Anna. 'Where's my father?'

'He is not at home this evening. And Patience did not care to send out Grace. I'll take care of you.'

In spite of William's observation not being specially called forth, he could not but observe the sudden flush, the glow of pleasure, or what looked like pleasure, that overspread Anna's countenance at the information. 'What's that for?' he thought, borrowing her recent words. But Mary began to sing again, and his attention was diverted.

Ten o'clock was the signal for their departure. As they were going out—William, Anna, and Herbert Dare, who took the opportunity to leave with them—Henry Ashley limped after them, and drew William aside in the hall.

'Honour bright, mind, my friend!'

William did not understand. 'Honour bright always,' said he. 'But what do you mean?'

'You'll not get making love to her as you go home!'

William could not help laughing. He turned his amused face full on Henry. 'Be at rest. I would not care to make love to her had I full leave and license from the Quaker society, granted me in public conclave.'

'Did you think I did not see her brightened countenance when you told her she was to go home with you?' retorted Henry.

'I saw it, too. I conclude she was pleased that her father was not coming for her, little undutiful thing! However it may have been, rely upon it the brightening was not for me.'

Pressing his hand warmly, with a pressure that no false friend ever gave, William hastened away. It was time. Herbert Dare and Anna had not waited for him, but were ever so far a-head.

'Very polite of you!' cried William, when he caught them up. 'Anna, had you gone pitching off that part of the path that they are mending, and broken your head in the road, I should have been responsible, you know. You might have waited for me.'

He spoke in good humour, making a joke of it. Herbert Dare did not appear to receive it as one, He retorted haughtily—

'Do you suppose I am not capable of taking

care of Miss Lynn? As much so as you, at any rate.'

'Possibly,' coolly returned William, not losing his good-humoured tone. Herbert Dare had given Anna his arm. William walked near her on the other side. Thus they reached Mr. Lynn's.

'Good night,' said Herbert, shaking hands with her. 'Good night to you, Halliburton.'

'Good night,' replied William.

Herbert Dare set off running. William knocked at the door, and waited until it was opened. Then he likewise shook hands with Anna, and saw her in.

Frank and Gar were putting up their books for the night, when William entered. The boarders had gone to bed. Jane, a very unusual thing for her, was sitting by the fire, doing nothing.

'Am I not idle, William?' she said.

William bent to kiss her. 'There's no need for you to be anything but idle now, mother.'

'No need! William, you know better. There's great need that none should be idle; none in all the world. But I have a bad headache to-night.'

'William,' called out Gar, 'they brought this round for you from East's. Young Tom came with it.'

It was the case of fossils and the microscope. William observed that they need not have sent them, as he should want them there on the next evening. 'Patience said she had not had time to

use the microscope,' he continued. 'I think I will take it in to her. I suppose she has been buying linen, and wants to see if the threads are even.'

'The Lynns will be gone to bed at this time,' said Jane.

'Not to-night. I have but just seen Anna home from Mrs. Ashley's; and Mr. Lynn is gone out to supper.'

He turned to leave the room with the microscope, but Gar was looking at the fossils, and asked the loan of it. A few minutes, and William finally went out.

Patience came to the door, in answer to his knock. She thanked him for the microscope, and stood a minute or two, chatting. Patience was fond of a gossip; there was no denying it.

'Will thee not walk in?'

'Not now,' he said, turning away. 'Good-night, Patience.'

'Good-night to thee. Thee send in Anna, please. She is having a pretty long talk with thy mother.'

William was at a loss. 'I saw Anna in from Mr. Ashley's.'

'She did but ask whether her father was home, and then ran through the house,' replied Patience. 'She had a message for thy mother, she said, from Margaret Ashley.'

'Mrs. Ashley does not send messages to my mother,' returned William, in some wonder.

'They have no acquaintance with each other—beyond a bow, in passing.'

'She must have sent her one to-night—why else should the child go in to deliver it?' persisted Patience. 'Not but what Anna is always running in to thy house at nights. I fear she must trouble thy mother at her class.'

'She never stays long enough for that,' replied William. 'When she does come in—and it is not often—she just opens the door; "How dost thee, friend Jane Halliburton?" and out again.'

'Then thee can know nothing about it, William. I tell thee she never stays less than an hour, and she is always there. I say to her that one of these evenings thy mother may likely be hinting to her that her room will be more acceptable than her company. Thee send her home now, please.'

William turned away. Curious thoughts were passing through his mind. That Anna did not go in, in the frequent way Patience intimated; that she rarely stayed above a minute or two, he knew. He knew—at least, he felt perfectly sure—that Anna was not at his house now; had not been at it. And yet Patience said 'Send her home.'

'Has Anna been here?' he asked, when he went in.

'Anna? No.'

Not just that moment, to draw observation, but presently, William quitted the room, and went into the garden at the back. A very unpleasant

suspicion had arisen in his mind. It might not have occurred to him, but for certain glances which he had observed pass that evening between Herbert Dare and Anna—glances of confidence—as if they had a private mutual understanding on some point or other. He had not understood them then: he very much feared he was about to understand them now.

Opening the gate leading to the field at the back, commonly called Atterly's Field, he looked cautiously out. For a moment or two he could see nothing. The hedge was thick on either side, and no living being appeared to be underneath its shade. But he saw farther when his eyes became accustomed to the obscurity.

Pacing slowly in company, were Herbert Dare and Anna. Now moving on, a few steps; now stopping to converse more at ease. William drew a deep breath. He saw quite enough to be sure this was not the first time they had so paced together: and thought after thought crowded on his mind; one idea, one remembrance chasing another.

Was this the explanation of the plaid cloak, which had paraded stealthily on that very field path during the past winter? There could not be a doubt of it. And was it in this manner that Anna's flying absences from home were spent—absences which she, in her unpardonable deceit, had accounted for to Patience by saying that she

was with Mrs. Halliburton? Alas for Anna! alas for all who deviate by an untruth from the straight path of rectitude! If the misguided child —she was little better than a child—could but have seen the future that was before her! It may have been very pleasant, very romantic to steal a march on Patience, and pace out there, all independent, in the cold, chattering to Herbert Dare; listening to his protestations that he cared for nobody in the world but herself; never had cared, never should care: but it was laying up for Anna a day of reckoning, the like of which had rarely fallen on a young head. William seemed to take it all in at a glance; and, rising tumultuously over other unpleasant thoughts, came the remembrance of Henry Ashley's misplaced and ill-starred love.

With another deep breath, that was more like a groan—for Herbert Dare never brought good to anybody in his life, and William knew it—William set off towards them. Whether they heard the footsteps, or whether they deemed the time for parting had come, certain it was that Herbert was gone before William could reach them, and Anna was speeding towards her home with a light and fleet step. William placed himself in her way, and she started aside, with a scream that went echoing through the field. Then they had not heard him.

'William, is it thee? Thee hast frightened me nearly out of my senses.'

'Anna,' he gravely said, 'Patience is waiting for you.'

Anna Lynn's imagination led her to all sorts of fantastic fears. 'Oh, William, thee hast not been in to Patience!' she exclaimed, in a fit of trembling. 'Thee hast not been to our house to seek me!'

They had reached his gate now. He halted, and took her hand in his, his manner impressive, his voice firm. 'Anna, I must speak to you as I would to my own sister; as I might to Janey, had she lived, and been drawn into this undesirable imprudence. Though, indeed, I should not then speak, but act. What tales are they that Herbert Dare is deceiving you with?'

'Hast thee been in to Patience? Hast thee been in to Patience?' reiterated Anna.

'Patience knows nothing of this. She thinks you are at our house. I ask you, Anna, what foolish tales Herbert Dare is deceiving you with?'

Anna—relieved on the score of her fright—shook her head petulantly. 'He is not deceiving me with any. He would not deceive.'

'Anna, hear me. His very nature, as I believe, is deceit. I fear he has little truth, little honour within him. Is Herbert professing to—to love you.'

'I will not answer thee aught. I will not hear thee speak against Herbert Dare.'

'Anna,' he continued, in a lower tone, "you ought to be *afraid* of Herbert Dare. He is not a good man.'

How wilful she was! 'It is of no use thy talking,' she reiterated, putting her fingers to her ears. 'Herbert Dare *is* good. I will not hear thee speak against him.'

'Then, Anna, as you meet it in this way, I must inform your father or Patience of what I have seen. If you will not keep yourself out of harm's way, they must do it for you.'

It terrified her beyond everything. Anna could have died, rather than suffer her escapade to get to the ears of home. 'How can thee talk of harm, William? What harm is likely to come to me? I did no more harm talking to Herbert Dare here, than I did, talking to him in Margaret Ashley's drawing-room.'

'My dear child, you do not understand things,' he answered. 'The very fact of your stealing from your home to walk about in this manner, however innocent it may be in itself, would do you incalculable harm in the eyes of the world. And I am quite sure that in no shape can Herbert Dare bring you good, or conduce to your good. Tell me one thing, Anna: Have you learnt to care much for him?'

'I don't care for him at all,' responded Anna.

'No! Then why walk about with him?'

'Because it's fun to cheat Patience.'

'Oh, Anna, this is very wrong, very foolish. Do you mean what you say—that you do not care for him?'

'Of course I mean it,' she answered. 'I think he is very kind and pleasant, and he gave me a pretty locket. But that's all. William, thee will not tell upon me?' she continued, clinging to his arm, her tone changing to one of imploring entreaty, as the terror, which she had been endeavouring to hide with light words, returned upon her. 'William! thee art kind and obliging —thee will not tell upon me! I will promise thee never, never to meet Herbert Dare again, if thee will not.'

'It would be for your own sake, Anna, that I should speak. How do I know that you would keep your word?'

'I give thee my promise that I will! I will not meet Herbert Dare in this way again. I tell thee I do not care to meet him. Can thee not believe me?'

He did believe her, implicitly. Her eyes were streaming down with tears; her pretty hands clung about him. He did like Anna very much, and he would not draw down vexation upon her, if it could be avoided with expediency.

'I will rely upon you then, Anna. Believe me, you could not pick out a worse friend in all Helstonleigh, than Herbert Dare. I have your word?'

'Yes. And I have thine.'

He placed her arm within his own, and led her to the back door of her house. Patience was standing at it. 'I have brought you the little truant,' he said.

'It is well thee hast,' replied Patience. 'I had just opened the door to come after her. Anna, thee art worse than a wild thing. Running off in this manner!'

It had not been in William's way to see much of Anna's inward qualities. He had not detected her deceit; he did not know that she could be untruthful when it suited her so to be. He had firm faith in her word, never questioning but it might be depended upon. Nevertheless, when he came afterwards to reflect upon the matter, he deemed it might be his duty to give Patience a little word of caution. And this he could do without compromising Anna.

He contrived to see Patience alone the very next day. She began talking of their previous evening at the Ashleys'.

'Yes,' observed William, "it was a pleasant evening. It would have been all the pleasanter, though, but for one who was there—Herbert Dare.'

'I do not admire the Dares,' said Patience, in a frigid tone.

'Nor I. But I observed one thing, Patience—that he admires Anna. Were Anna my sister, I

should not like her to be too much admired by Herbert Dare. So take care of her.'

Patience looked steadily at him. William continued, his tone dropped to a confidential one.

'You know what Herbert Dare is, Patience—fonder of leading people to ill than to good. Anna is giddy—as you tell yourself twenty times in a day. I would keep her carefully under my own eye. I would not even allow her to run into our house at night, as she is fond of doing,' he added, with marked emphasis. 'She is as safe there as she is here; but it is giving her a taste of liberty that she may not be the better for in the end. When she comes in, send Grace with her, or bring her yourself: I will see her home again. Tell her she is a grown-up young lady now, and it is not proper that she should go out unattended,' he concluded, laughing.

'William, I do not quite understand thee. Hast thee cause to say this?'

'All I say, Patience, is—keep her out of the way of possible harm, of undesirable friendships. Were Anna to be drawn into a liking for Herbert Dare, I am sure it would not be agreeable to Mr. Lynn. He would never consider the Dares a desirable family for her to marry into——'

'Marry into the family of the Dares!' interrupted Patience, hotly. 'Are thee losing thy senses, William?'

'These likings sometimes lead to marriage,' quietly continued William. 'Therefore, I say, keep her away from all chance of forming such. Believe me, my advice is good.'

'I think I understand,' concluded Patience. 'I thank thee kindly, William.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

LOOKING INTO THE SHOP WINDOWS.

A VERY unpleasant part of the story has now to be touched upon. Unpleasant things occur in real life, and if true pictures have to be given of the world as it exists, as it goes on its round, day by day, the mention of them cannot be wholly avoided.

Certain words of William Halliburton to Patience had run in this fashion. 'Were Anna to be drawn into a liking for Herbert Dare, I am sure it would not be agreeable to Mr. Lynn. He would never consider the Dares a desirable family for her to marry into.' In thus speaking, William had striven to put the case in a polite sort of form for the ears of Patience. As to any probability of marriage between one of the Dares and Anna Lynn, he would scarcely have believed it within the range of possibility. The Dares, one and all, would have considered Anna far beneath them in position, while the difference of religion would on Anna's side be a bar. The worst that William had contemplated was the 'liking' he had hinted at. He cared for Anna's welfare and comfort as

he would have cared for a sister's, and he believed it would not contribute to her comfort, that she should become attached to Herbert Dare. But for compromising Anna—and he had given his word not to do it—he would have spoken out fully, that there was a danger of this liking supervening, if she met him as he feared she had been in the habit of doing. Certainly, he would not have alluded to the remote possibility of marriage, the mention of which had so scared Patience.

What had William thought, what had Patience said, could they have known that this liking was already implanted in Anna's heart beyond recal? Alas! that it should have been so! Quiet, childish, timid as Anna outwardly appeared, the strongest affection had been aroused in her heart for Herbert Dare—was filling it to its every crevice. These apparently shy, sensitive natures are sometimes only the more passionate and wayward within. One evening, a few months previously, Anna was walking in Atterly's field, behind their house. Anna had been in the habit of walking there—nay, of playing there—since she was a child, and she would as soon have associated harm with their garden, as with that field. Farmer Atterly kept his sheep in it, and Anna had run about as long as she could remember with the little lambs. Herbert Dare came up accidentally—the path through it, leading along the back of the houses, was public, though not

much frequented—and he spoke to Anna. Anna knew him to say 'Good day' when she passed him in the street; and she now and then saw him at Mrs. Ashley's. Herbert stayed talking with her a few minutes. and then went on his way. Somehow, from that time, he and Anna encountered each other there pretty frequently; and that was how the liking grew. If a qualm of conscience crossed Miss Anna at times, that it was not quite the thing for a young lady to do, thus to meet a gentleman in secret, she conveniently sent the qualm away. That harm should arise from it in any way, never so much as crossed her mind for a moment; and to do Herbert Dare justice, real harm was probably as far from his mind as from hers. He grew to like her, almost as she liked him. Herbert Dare did not, in the sight of Helstonleigh, stand out a model of all the cardinal virtues; but he was not all bad. Anna believed him all good—all honour, truth, excellence; and her heart had flashed out a rebuke to William when he hinted that Herbert might not be a paragon. She only knew that the very sound of his footstep made her heart leap with happiness; she only knew that to her he appeared everything that was bright and fascinating. Her great dread was, lest their intimacy should become known, and separation ensue. That, separation would be inevitable, were her father or Patience to become cognisant of it, Anna rightly believed.

Cunning little sophist that she was! She would fain persuade herself that an innocent meeting out-of-doors was justifiable, where a meeting in-doors was not practicable. They had no acquaintance with the Dares; consequently, Herbert could plead no excuse for calling in upon them—none at least that would be likely to stand patent with Patience. And so the young lady reconciled her conscience in the best way she could, stole out as often as she was able to meet him, and left discovery to take care of itself.

Discovery came in the shape of William Halliburton. It was bad enough; but far less alarming to Anna than it might have been. Had her father dropped upon her, she would have run away and fallen into the nearest ditch, in her terror and consternation.

Though guilty of certain trifling inaccuracies—such as protesting she 'did not care' for Herbert Dare — Anna, in that interview with William, fully meant to keep the promise she made, not to meet him. Promises, however, given under the influence of terror or other sudden emotion, are not always kept. It would probably prove so with Anna's. One thing was indisputable: that where a mind could so far forget its moral rectitude as to practise deceit in one particular, like Anna was doing, it would not be over-scrupulous to keep its better promises.

Anna's thoughts for many a morning latterly,

when she arose, had been 'This evening I shall see him,' and the prospect seemed to quicken her fingers, like it quickened her heart. But on the morning after the discovery, her first thought was, 'I must never see him again as I have done. How shall I warn him not to come?' That he would be in the field again that evening, unless warned, she knew: if William Halliburton saw him there, a quarrel might ensue between them; at any rate, an unpleasant scene. Anna descended, feeling cross and petulant; and inclined to wish William had been at the bottom of the sea, before he had found out what he did find out the previous evening.

'Where there's a will, there's a way,' it is said. Anna Lynn contrived that day to exemplify it. Her will was set upon seeing Herbert Dare, and she did see him: it can scarcely be said by accident. Anna contrived to be sent into the town by Patience on an errand; and she contrived to linger so long in the neighbourhood of Mr. Dare's office, gazing in at the shops in West Street, (if Patience had but seen her!) that Herbert Dare passed.

'Anna!'

'Herbert, I have been waiting in the hope of seeing thee,' she whispered, her manner timid as a fawn, her pretty cheeks blushing. 'Thee must not come again in the evening, for I cannot meet thee.'

'Why so?' asked Herbert.

'William Halliburton saw me with thee last night, and he says it is not right. I had to give him my promise not to meet thee again, or else he would have told my father.'

Herbert cast a word to William; not a complimentary one. 'What business is it of his?' he asked.

'I dare not stay talking to thee, Herbert. Patience, she'll be likely sending Grace after me, finding me so long away. But I was obliged to tell thee this, lest thee should be coming again. Fare thee well!'

Passing swiftly from him, Anna went on her way. Herbert did not choose to follow her in the public street. She went along, poor child, with her head down and her eyelashes glistening. It was little else than bitter sorrow, thus to part with Herbert Dare.

Patience was standing at the door, looking out for her when she came in sight of home. Patience had given little heed to what William Halliburton said the previous night, or she might not have sent Anna into Helstonleigh alone. In point of fact, Patience had thought William a little overfanciful. But when, instead of being home at four o'clock, as she ought to have been, the clock struck five, and she had not made her appearance, Patience began to think she did let her have her liberty too much.

'Now where has thee been?' was the salutation of Patience, delivered in a tone of acrimony.

'I met so many people, Patience. They stayed to talk with me.'

Brushing past Patience, conveniently deaf to her subsequent reproofs, Anna flew up to her own room. When she came down, her father had entered, and Patience was pouring out the tea.

'Will thee tell thy father where thee has been?'

The command was delivered in Patience's driest tone. Anna, inwardly tormented, outwardly vexed, burst into tears. The Quaker looked up in surprise.

Patience explained. Anna had left home at three o'clock to execute a little commission: she might well have been home in three-quarters of an hour; and she had only made her appearance now.

'What kept thee, child?' asked her father.

'I only looked in at a shop or two,' pleaded Anna, through her tears. 'There were the prettiest new engravings in at Thomas Woakam's! If Patience had wanted me to run both ways, she should have said so.'

Notwithstanding the little spice of impertinence peeping out in the last sentence, Samuel Lynn saw no reason to correct Anna. That she could be ever wrong, he scarcely admitted to his own heart. 'Dry thy tears, child, and take thy tea, said he. 'Patience wanted thee, maybe, for some

household matter; it can wait to another opportunity. Patience,' he added, as if to drown the sound of his words and their remembrance, 'are my shirts in order?'

'Thy shirts in order?' repeated Patience. 'Why does thee ask that?'

'I should not have asked it without reason,' returned he. 'Will thee please give me an answer?'

'The old shirts are as much in order as things, beginning to wear, can be,' replied Patience. 'Thy new shirts I cannot say much about. They will not be finished on this side Midsummer, unless Anna sits to them a little closer than she is doing now.'

'Thy shirts will be ready quite in time, father; before the old ones are gone beyond wearing,' spoke up Anna.

'I don't know that,' said Mr. Lynn. 'Had they been ready, child, I might have wanted them now. I am going a journey.'

'Is it the French journey thee has talked of once or twice lately?' interposed Patience.

'Yes,' said Samuel Lynn. 'The master was speaking to me about it this afternoon. We were interrupted, and I did not altogether gather when he wishes me to start; but I fancy it will be immediately——'

'Oh, father! could thee not take me?'

The interruption came from Anna. Her blue

eyes were glistening, her cheeks were crimson; a journey in the interior of France wore charms for her as great as it did for Cyril Dare. All the way home from West Street, she had been thinking how she should spend her miserable home days, debarred of the evening snatches of Mr. Herbert's charming society. Going to France would be something.

'I wish I could take thee, child! But thee art aware thee might as well ask me to take the Malvern Hills.'

In her inward conviction, Anna believed she might. Before she could oppose any answering, but most inutile argument, Samuel Lynn's attention was directed to the road. Parting opposite to his house, as if they had just walked together from the manufactory, were Mr. Ashley and William Halliburton. The master walked on. William, catching Samuel Lynn's eye, came across and entered.

Mr. Ashley had been telling William some news. Though no vacillating man in a general way, it appeared that he had again re-considered his determination with regard to despatching William to France. He had come to the resolve to send him, as well as Samuel Lynn. William could not help surmising that his betrayed emotion the previous night, his fears touching Mr. Ashley's reason for not sending him, may have had something to do with that gentleman's change of mind.

'Will you be troubled with me?' asked he of Mr. Lynn, when he had imparted this.

'If such be the master's fiat, I cannot help being troubled with thee,' was the answer of Samuel Lynn; but the tone of his voice spoke of anything rather than dissatisfaction. Why is he sending thee as well as myself?'

'He told me he thought it might be best that you should show me the markets, and introduce me to the skin merchants, as I should probably have to make the journey alone in future,' replied William. 'I had no idea, until the master mentioned it now, that you had ever made the journey yourself, Mr. Lynn; you never told me.'

'There was nothing, that I am aware of, to call for the information,' observed the Quaker, in his usual dry manner. 'I went there two or three times on my own account when I was in business for myself. Did the master tell thee when he should expect us to start?'

'Not precisely. The beginning of the week, I think.'

'I have been asking my father if he cannot take me,' put in Anna, in a plaintive tone, looking at William.

'And I have answered her, that she may as well ask me to take the Malvern hills,' was the rejoinder of Samuel Lynn. 'I could as likely take the one as the other.'

Likely or unlikely, Samuel Lynn would have

taken her beyond all doubt—taken her with a greedy, sheltering grasp—had he foreseen the result of his leaving her, the grievous trouble that was to fall upon her head.

'Thee will drink a dish of tea with us this evenning, William?'

It was Patience who spoke. William hesitated, but he saw they would be pleased at his doing so, and he sat down. The conversation turned upon France—upon Samuel Lynn's experience of it, and William's anticipations. Anna lapsed into silence and abstraction.

In the bustle of moving, when Samuel Lynn was departing for the manufactory, William, before going home to his books, contrived to obtain a word alone with Anna.

'Have you thought of our compact?'

'Yes,' she said, freely meeting his eyes, in honest truth. 'I saw him this afternoon in the street; I went on purpose to try and meet him. He will not come again.'

'That is well. Mind and take care of yourself, Anna,' he added, with a smile. 'I shall be away, and not able to give an eye to you, as I freely confess it had been my resolve to do.'

Anna shook her head. 'He does not come again,' she repeated. 'Thee may go away believing me, William.'

And William did go away believing her—went away to France believing her; believing that the undesirable intimacy was at an end.

CHAPTER XXV.

PATIENCE COME TO GRIEF.

In the early part of March, Samuel Lynn and William departed on the French journey. And the first thought that occurred to Patience afterwards was one that is apt to occur to many thrifty housekeepers on the absence of the master—that of instituting a thorough cleansing of the house, from the garret to the cellar; or, as Anna mischievously expressed it, 'turning the house inside out.' She knew Patience did not like he wild phrases, and therefore she used them.

Patience was parting with Grace—the servant who had been with them so many years. Grace had resolved to get married. In vain Patience assured her that marriage, collectively speaking, was found to be nothing better than a bed of thorns. Grace would not listen. Other people had risked the thorns before her, and she thought she must try her chance with the rest. Patience had no resource but to fall in with the decision, and to look out for another servant. It appeared that she could not find one readily; at least, one whom she would venture to try. She was over-

particular; and while she waited and looked out, she engaged Hester Dell, a humble member of her own persuasion, to come in temporarily. Hester lived with her aged mother, not far off, chiefly supporting herself by doing fine needlework at her own, or at the Friends' houses. She readily consented to take up her abode with Patience for a month or so, to help with the housework, and looked upon it as a sort of holiday.

'It's of no use to begin the house until Grace shall be gone,' observed Patience to Anna. 'She'd likely be scrubbing the paper on the walls, instead of the paint, for her head is turned just now.'

'What fun if she should!' ejaculated Anna.

'Fun for thee, perhaps, who art ignorant of cost and labour,' rebuked Patience. 'I shall wait until Grace has departed. The day that she goes, Hester comes in; and I shall have the house begun the day following.'

'Couldn't thee have it begun the same day?' saucily asked Anna.

'Will thee attend to thy stitching?' returned Patience, sharply. 'Thy father's wristbands will not be done the better for thy nonsense.'

'Shall I be turned out of my bedroom?' resumed Anna.

'For a night, perchance. Thee can go into thy father's. But the top of the house will be done first.'

'Is the roof to be scrubbed?' went on Anna.

'I don't know how Hester will hold on while she does it.'

'Thee art in one of thy wilful humours this morning,' responded Patience. 'Art thee going to set me at defiance now thy father's back is turned?'

'Who said anything about setting thee at defiance?' asked Anna. 'I *should* like to see Hester at the roof!'

'Thee had better behave thyself, Anna,' was the retort of Patience. And Anna, in her joyous wilfulness, burst into a merry laugh.

Grace departed, and Hester came in: a quiet little body, of forty years, with dark hair and decayed teeth. Patience, as good as her word, was up betimes the following morning, and had the house up betimes, to institute the ceremony. Their house contained the same accommodation inside as did Mrs. Halliburton's, with this addition —that the open garret in the Quaker's had been partitioned off into two chambers. Patience slept in one; Grace had occupied the other. The three bedrooms on the floor underneath were used, one by Mr. Lynn, one by Anna; the other was kept as a spare room, for any chance visitor; the 'best room,' it was usually called. The house belonged to Mr. Lynn. Formerly, both houses had belonged to him; but at the time of his loss he had sold the other to Mr. Ashley.

The ablutions were in full play. Hester, with a

pail, and mop, and scrubbing-brush, and other essential requisites, was ensconced in the top chambers; Anna, ostensibly at her wristband stitching (but the work did not get on too fast), was singing to herself, in an under tone, in one of the parlours, the door safely shut; while Patience was exercising a general superintendence, giving an eye everywhere. Suddenly there echoed a loud noise, as of a fall, and a scream resounded throughout the house. It appeared to come from what they usually called the bed-room floor. Anna flew up the first stairs, and Hester Dell flew down the upper ones. At the foot of the garret stairs, her head close against the door of Anna's chamber, lay Patience, and a heavy bed-pole. In attempting to carry the pole down from her room, she had somehow got it entangled with her legs, and had fallen heavily.

'Is the house coming down?' Anna was beginning to say. But she stopped in consternation when she saw Patience. Hester attempted to pick her up.

'Thee cannot raise me, Hester. Anna, child, thee must not attempt to touch me. I fear my leg is br——'

Her voice died away, her eyes closed, and a livid hue, as of death, overspread her countenance. Anna, more terrified than she had ever been in her life, flew round to Mrs. Halliburton's.

Dobbs, from her kitchen, saw her coming—saw

the young face streaming down with tears, heard the short cries of alarm — and Dobbs stepped out.

'Why, what on earth's the matter now?' asked she.

Anna laid hold of Dobbs, and clung to her; partly that, to do so, seemed some protection in her great terror. 'Oh, Dobbs, come in to Patience!' she cried. 'I think she's dying.'

The voice, rising to a shriek, in its uncontrolled emotion, reached the ears of Jane. She came forth from the parlour. Dobbs was then running in to Samuel Lynn's, and Jane ran also, comprehending nothing.

Patience was reviving when they got in. All her cry was, that they must not move her. One of her legs was in some manner doubled under her, and doubled over the pole. Jane felt a certain conviction that it was broken.

'Who can run the fastest?' she asked. 'We must get Mr. Parry here.'

Hester waited for no further instructions. She caught up her fawn-coloured shawl and her grey bonnet, and was off, putting them on as she ran. Anna, sobbing wildly, turned and hid her face on Jane, like one who wants to be comforted. Then, her mood changing, she threw herself down beside Patience, the tears from her own eyes, falling on Patience's face.

'Patience, dear Patience, can thee forgive me?

I have been wilful and naughty, but I never meant to cross thee really. I did it only to tease thee; I loved thee all the while.'

Patience, suffering as she was, drew down the repentant face to kiss it fervently. I know it, dear child; I know thee. Don't thee distress thyself for me.'

Mr. Parry came, and Patience was lifted up, and carried into the spare room. Her leg was broken, and badly broken; the surgeon called it a compound fracture.

So there was an end to the grand scheme of cleansing for a long while to come! Patience lay in sickness and pain, and Hester had to make her the first care. Anna's spirits revived in a day or two. Mr. Parry said a cure would be effected in time; that the worst of the business was the long confinement for Patience; and Anna forgot her dutiful fit of repentance. Patience *would* be well again, would be about as before; and, as to the present confinement, Anna rather grew to look upon it as the interposition of some good fairy spirit, who must have taken her own liberty under its special protection.

Whether Anna would have succeeded in eluding the vigilance of Patience *up*, cannot be told; she certainly did that of Patience *down*. Anna had told Herbert Dare that he was not to pay a visit to Atterly's field again, or expect her to pay one; but Herbert Dare was about the last person to

obey such advice. Had William Halliburton remained to be—as Herbert termed it—a treacherous spy, there's no question but Herbert would have striven to set his vigilance at defiance: with the absence of William, the field, both literally and figuratively, was open to him. In the absence of Samuel Lynn, it was doubly open. Herbert Dare knew perfectly well that if the Quaker once got the slightest inkling of his private acquaintance with Anna, it would be effectually put a stop to. The wearing a cloak resembling William Halliburton's, on his visits to the field, had been the result of a bright idea. It had suddenly occurred to Mr. Herbert, that if the Quaker's lynx eyes did by mischance catch sight of the cloak, promenading some fine night at the back of his residence, they would accord it no particular notice, concluding the wearer to be William Halliburton taking moonlight exercise at the back of *his* residence. Nevertheless, Herbert had timed his visits so as to make pretty sure that Samuel Lynn was beyond view, safely ensconced in Mr. Ashley's manufactory; and he had generally succeeded. Not quite always, as the reader knows.

Anna was of a most persuadable nature. In defiance of her promise to William, she suffered Herbert Dare to persuade her again into the old system of meeting him. Guileless as a child, never giving thought to wrong or to harm—beyond the wrong and harm of thus clandestinely

stealing out, and that wrong she conveniently ignored—she saw nothing very grave in the doing it. Herbert could not come in-doors, Patience would be sure not to welcome him; and therefore, she logically argued to her own mind, she must go out to him. She had learnt to like Herbert Dare a great deal too well not to wish to meet him, to talk with him. Herbert, on his part, had learnt to like her. An hour passed in whispering to Anna, in mischievously untying her sober cap, and letting the curls fall, in laying his own hand fondly on the young head, and telling her he cared for her beyond every earthly thing, had grown to be one of his most favourite recreations: and Herbert was not one to deny himself any recreation that he took a fancy to. He intended no harm to the pretty child; it is possible that had any one seriously pointed out to him the harm that might arise to Anna, in the estimation of Helstonleigh, should these stolen meetings be found out, Herbert might for once have done violence to his inclinations, and not persisted in them. Unfortunately—very unfortunately, as it was to turn out—there were none to give this word of caution. Patience was ill, William was away: and nobody else knew anything about it. In point of fact, Patience could not be said to know anything, for the warning of William had not made the impression that it ought to have done. Patience's confiding nature was in fault:

for Anna deliberately to meet Herbert Dare or any other 'Herbert' in secret, she would have deemed a simple impossibility. In the judgment of Patience, it had been nothing less than irredeemable sin.

What did Herbert Dare promise to himself, in thus leading Anna into this imprudence? Herbert promised himself nothing—beyond the passing gratification of the hour. Herbert had never been one to give any care to the future, for himself or for anybody else; and he was not likely to begin to do it yet awhile. As to seeking Anna for his wife, such a thought had never crossed his mind. In the first place, at the rate the Dares—Herbert and his brothers—were going on, a wife for any of them seemed amongst the impossibilities. Unless, indeed, she made the bargain beforehand, to live upon air; there was no chance of their having anything else to keep her upon. But, had Herbert been in a position, pecuniarily considered, to marry ten wives, Anna Lynn would not have been one of them. Agreeable as it might be to him to linger with Anna, he considered her far beneath himself; and pride, with Herbert, was always in the ascendant. Herbert had been introduced to Anna Lynn at Mrs. Ashley's, and that threw a sort of prestige round her; she was also enshrined in the respectable Quaker body of the town: but for these facts, for being who she was, Herbert might have been less

scrupulous in his mode of behaviour to her. He would not—it may be as well to say he dared not—be otherwise than considerate towards Anna Lynn; but, on the other hand, he would not have deemed her worthy to become his wife. On the part of Samuel Lynn, he would far rather have seen his child in her coffin, than the wife of Herbert Dare. The young Dares did not bear a good name in Helstonleigh.

In this most uncertain and unsatisfactory state of things, what on earth—as Dobbs had said to Anna—did Herbert want with her at all? Far, far better that he had allowed Anna to fall in with the sensible advice of William Halliburton—'Do not meet him more.' It was a sad pity; and it is very probable that Herbert Dare regretted it afterwards, in the grievous misery it entailed. Misery to both of them; and without positive ill conduct on the part of either.

But that time has not come yet, and we are only at the stage of Samuel Lynn's absence and Patience's broken leg. Anna had taken to steal out again; and her wits were at work to concoct a plausible plea for her absences to Hester Dell, that no undesirable tales might be carried to Patience.

'Hester, Patience is a fidget. Thee must see that. She'd like me to keep at my work all day, all day, evening too, and never have a breath of fresh air! She'd like me to shut myself up in

this parlour, like she has now to be shut up in her room; never to be in the garden in the lovely twilight; never to run and look at the pretty lambs in the field; never to go next door and say "How dost thee?" to Jane Halliburton! It's a shame, Hester!'

'Well, I think it would be, if it were true,' responded Hester, a simple woman in mind and speech, who loved Anna nearly as well as Patience did. 'But does thee not think thee are mistaken, child? Patience seems anxious that thee should go out. She says I am to take thee.'

'I dare say!' responded Anna; 'and leave her all alone! How would she come down stairs with her broken leg, if anybody knocked at the door? She's a dreadful fidget, Hester. She'd like to watch me as a cat watches a mouse. Look at last night! It's all on account of these shirts. She thinks I shan't get them done. I shall.'

'Why, dear, I think thee will,' returned Hester, casting her eyes on the work. 'Thee are getting on with them.'

'I am getting on nicely. I have done all the stitching, and nearly the plain part of the bodies; I shall soon be at the gathers. What did she say to thee last night?'

'She said, "Go to the parlour, Hester, and see whether Anna does not want a light." And I came and could not find thee. And then she said thee wast always running into the next door,

troubling them, and she would not have it done. Thee came in just at the time, and she scolded thee.'

'Yes, she did,' resentfully spoke Anna. 'I tell thee, Hester, she's the worst fidget breathing. I give thee my word, Hester, that I had not been inside the Halliburtons' door. I had been in this garden and in the field. I had been close at work all day——'

'Not quite all day, dear,' interrupted Hester, willing to soothe the appearance of matters to the child as far as she was able. 'Thee had thy friend Mary Ashley here to call in the morning, and thee had Sarah Dixon in the afternoon.'

'Well, I had been at work a good part of the day,' corrected Anna, 'and I wanted some fresh air after it. Where's the crime?'

'Crime, dear! It's only natural. If I had not my errands to go upon, and so got the air that way I'd like myself to run in the field, when my work was done.'

'So would anybody else, except Patience,' retorted Anna. 'Hester, look thee. When she asks after me again, thee hast no need to tell her, should I have run out. It only fidgets her, and she is not well enough to be fidgeted. Thee tell her I am at my sewing. But I *can't* be sewing for ever, Hester; I must have a few minutes' holiday from it now and then. Patience might have cause to grumble if I ran away and left it in the day.'

'Well, dear, I think it is only reasonable,' slowly answered Hester, considering the matter over. 'I'll not tell her thee art in the garden again; for she must be kept tranquil, friend Parry says.'

'She was just as bad when I was a little girl, Hester,' concluded Anna. 'She'd not let me run in the garden alone then, for fear I should eat the gooseberries. But it is not gooseberry season now.'

'All true and reasonable,' thought Hester Dell.

And so the young lady contrived to enjoy a fair share of evening liberty. Not but what she could have done with more, had she known how to get it. And as the weeks went on, and the cold weather of the early spring merged into summer days, into more genial nights, she and Herbert Dare grew bold in their immunity from discovery, and scarcely an evening passed but they might have been seen, had anybody been on the watch, in the field of Farmer Atterly. Anna had got the length of taking his arm now; and there they would pace under cover of the hedge, Herbert talking, and Anna dreaming that she was in Eden.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GOVERNESS'S EXPEDITION.

Herbert Dare sat enjoying the beauty of the April evening in the garden of Pomeranian Knoll. He was hoisted on the high back of a garden bench, and balanced himself astride on it, the tip of one toe resting on the seat, the other foot dangling. The month was drawing to its close, and the golden beams of the warm setting sun streamed right athwart Herbert's face. It might be supposed that he had seated himself there to bask in the soft, still air, in the lovely sunset: in point of fact, he hardly knew whether the sun was rising or setting—whether the evening was fair or foul—so buried was he in deep thought, in perplexing care.

The particular care which was troubling Herbert Dare, was one which has, at some time or other, troubled the peace of a great many of us. It was pecuniary embarrassment. Herbert had been in it a long while, had been sinking into it, in fact, deeper and deeper. He had managed to stave it off hitherto in some way or other; but the time, to do that much longer, was going

by. He was not given to forethought, it has been previously mentioned; but he could not conceal from himself that unpleasantness would ensue, and that speedily, unless something could be done. What was that something to be? He did not know; he could not imagine. His father protested that he had not the means to help him; and Herbert believed that Mr. Dare told the truth. Not that Mr. Dare knew of the embarrassment to its extent. If he had, it would have come to the same, so far as his help went. His sons, as he said, had drained him.

Anthony passed the end of the walk. Whether he saw Herbert or not, certain it was, that he turned away from his direction. Herbert lifted his eyes, an angry light shining in them. He lifted his voice also, angry, too.

'Here, you! Don't go skulking off because you see me sitting here. I want you.'

Anthony was taken to. It is more than probable that he *was* skulking off, and that he *had* seen Herbert, for he did not particularly care then to come in contact with his brother. Anthony was in embarrassment on his own score; was ill at ease from more causes than one; and when the mind is troubled, sharp words do not tend to soothe it. Little else than sharp words had been exchanged latterly between Anthony and Herbert Dare.

It was no temporary ill-feeling, cross to-day, pleased to-morrow, which had grown up between

them; the ill-will had existed a long while. Herbert believed that his brother had injured him, had wilfully played him false, and his heart bitterly resented it. That Anthony was in fault at the beginning, there was no doubt. He had drawn Herbert unsuspiciously—unsuspiciously on Herbert's part, you understand—into some mess with regard to bills. Anthony was fond of 'bills;' Herbert, more wise in that respect, had never meddled with them: his opinion coincided with his father's—that they were edged tools, which cut both ways. 'Eschew bills if you want to die upon your own bed,' was a saying of Mr. Dare's, frequently spoken for the benefit of his sons. Good advice, no doubt. Mr. Dare, as a lawyer, ought to know. Herbert had held by the advice; Anthony never had; and the time came when Anthony took care that his brother should not.

In a period of deep embarrassment for Anthony, he had persuaded Herbert to sign two bills for him, their aggregate amount being large; assuring him, in the most earnest and apparently truthful manner, that the money to meet them, when due, was already provided. Herbert, in his good nature, fell into the snare. It turned out not only that the bills were not met at all, but Anthony had so contrived it that Herbert should be responsible, not he. Herbert regarded it as a shameful piece of treachery, and he never ceased reproaching his brother. Anthony, who was of a sullen, morose temper by nature, resented the reproach; and

they did not lead together the most comfortable of lives. The bills were not settled yet; indeed, they formed part of Herbert's most pressing embarrassments. This was one cause of the ill-feeling between them, and there were others, of a different nature. Anthony and Herbert Dare had never been cordial with each other, even in childhood.

Anthony, called to, advanced. 'Who wants to skulk away?' asked he. 'Are you judging me by yourself?'

'I hope not,' returned Herbert, in a tone of the most withering contempt and scorn. 'Listen to me. I've told you five hundred times that I'll have some settlement, and if you don't come to it amicably, I'll force you to come to it. Do you hear, you? I'll *force* you to it.'

'Try it,' retorted Anthony, with a mocking laugh; and he coolly walked away.

Walked away, leaving Herbert in a towering rage. He felt inclined to follow him; to knock him down. Had Anthony only met the affair in a proper spirit, it had been different. Had he said, 'Herbert, I am uncommonly vexed—I'll see what can be done,' or words to that effect, half the sting on his brother's mind would have been removed; but, to taunt Herbert with having to pay—as he sometimes did—was nearly unbearable. Had Herbert been of Anthony's temper, he would have proved that it was unbearable.

But Herbert's temper was roused now. It was

the toss of a die whether he followed Anthony and struck him, or whether he did not. The die was cast by the appearance of the Signora Varsini; and Anthony, for that evening, escaped.

It was not very gallant of Herbert to remain where he was, in the presence of the governess, astride upon the garden bench. Herbert was feeling angry in no common degree, and this may have been his excuse. She came up, apparently in anger also. Her brow was frowning, her compressed mouth was drawn in to that extent that its lips were hidden.

There is sound advice in the old saying, or song: 'It is well to be off with the old love, before you are on with the new.' As sound advice as that of Mr. Dare's, relative to the bills. Herbert might have sung it in character. He should have made things square with the Signora Varsini, before entering too extensively on his friendship with Anna Lynn.

Not that the governess could be supposed to occupy any position in the mind or heart of Herbert Dare, except *as* governess; governess to his sisters. Herbert would probably have said so, had you asked him. What *she* might have said, is a different matter. She looks angry enough to say anything just now. The fact appeared to be—so far as anybody not personally interested in the matter could be supposed to gather it—that Herbert had given offence to the governess latterly, by not going to the school-room for what he called

his Italian lessons. Of course he could not be in two places at once; and if his leisure hour after dinner was spent in Atterly's field, or in going to Atterly's field, it was impossible that he could be in the school-room, learning Italian of the Italian governess. But she resented it as a slight. She was of an exacting nature, probably of a jealous nature; and she regarded it as a personal slight, and resented it bitterly. She had been rather cross-grained in her speech and manner to Herbert, in consequence; and that, *he* resented. But, being naturally of an easy temper, peaceably inclined, Herbert was no friend to unnecessary disputes. He tried what he could towards soothing the young lady; and, finding he effected no good that way, he adopted the other alternative—he shunned her. The governess perceived this, and worked her temper into a state of semi-fury.

She came down upon him full sail. The moment Herbert saw her he remembered having given her a half promise the previous day to pay her a visit that evening. 'Now for it!' thought he to himself.

'Why you keep me waiting like this?' began she, when she was close to him.

'Have I kept you waiting?' civilly returned Herbert. 'I am very sorry. The fact is, mademoiselle, I have a good deal of worry upon me, and I'm fit for nobody's company but my own, to-night. You might not have thanked me for my visit, had I come.'

'That is my own look-out,' replied the governess. 'When a gentleman makes a promise to me, I expect him to keep it. I go up to the school room, and I wait, I wait, I wait! Ah, my poor patience, how I wait! I have got that copy of Tasso, that you said you would like to see. Will you come?'

Herbert thought he was in for it. He glanced at the setting sun—at least, at the spot where the setting sun had been, for it had sunk below the horizon, leaving only some crimson streaks in the grey sky, to tell of what had been. Twilight was rapidly coming on, when he would depart to keep his usual evening visit: there was no time, he decided, for Tasso and the governess.

'I'll come another evening,' said he. 'I have an engagement, and I must go out to keep it.'

A stony hardness settled on the young lady's face. 'What engagement?' she imperatively demanded.

It might be thought that Herbert would have been justified in civilly declining to satisfy her curiosity. What was it to her? Apparently, he deemed otherwise. Possibly, he was afraid of an outbreak.

'What engagement! Oh—I am going to play a pool at billiards with Lord Hawkesley. He is in Helstonleigh again.'

'And that is what you go for, every evening, —to play billiards with Lord Hawkesley?' she resumed, her eyes glistening ominously.

'Of course it is, mademoiselle. With Hawkesley or other fellows.'

'A lie!' curtly responded mademoiselle.

'I say,' cried Herbert, laughing good-humouredly, 'do you call that orthodox language?'

'It nothing to you what I call it,' she cried, clipping her words in her vehemence, as she was apt to do when excited. 'It's not with Milord Hawkesley, it's not to billiards that you go! I know it is not.'

'Then I tell you that I often play at billiards,' cried Herbert. 'On my honour.'

'May-be, may-be,' answered she, very rapidly. 'But it not to billiards that you go every evening. Every evening!—every evening! Not an evening now, but you go out, you go out! I bought Tasso —do you know that I *bought* Tasso?—that I have bought it with my money, that you may have the pleasure of hearing me read it, as you said—as you call it? Should I spend the money, had I thought you would not come when I had got it—would not care to hear it read?'

Had she been in a more genial mood, Herbert would have told her that she was a simpleton for spending her money so; he would have told her that Tasso, read in the original, would have been to him unintelligible as Sanscrit. He had a faint remembrance of saying to mademoiselle that he should like to read Tasso, in answer to a remark that Tasso was her favourite of the Italian poets: but he had only made the observation casually, without seriously meaning anything. And she had been so foolish as to go and buy it!

'Will you come this evening and hear it begun?' she continued, breaking the pause, and speaking rather more graciously.

'Upon my word and honour, Bianca, I can't to-night,' he answered, feeling himself, between the two—the engagement made, and the engagement sought to be made—somewhat embarrassed. 'I will come another evening; you may depend upon me.'

'You say to me yesterday that you would come this evening; that I might depend upon you. Much you care!'

'But I could not help myself. An engagement arose, and I was obliged to fall in with it. I was, indeed. I'll hear Tasso another evening.'

'You will not break your paltry engagement at billiards to keep your word to a lady! C'est bien!'

'It—it is not altogether that,' replied Herbert, getting out of the reproach in the best manner he could. 'I have some business as well.'

She fastened her glistening eyes full upon him. There was an expression in them which Herbert neither understood nor liked. 'C'est très-bien!' she slowly repeated. 'I know where you are going, and for what!'

A smile—at her assumption of knowledge, and what it was worth—flitted over Herbert Dare's face. 'You are very wise,' said he.

'Take care of yourself, mon ami! C'est tout.'

'Now, mademoiselle, what is the matter, that you should look and speak in that manner?' he

asked, still in the same light, good-humoured tone, as if he would fain pass the affair away in a joke. 'I'm sure I have enough bother upon me, without your adding to it.'

'What is your bother?'

'Never mind; it would give you no pleasure to know it. It is caused by Anthony—and be hanged to him!'

'Anthony is worth ten of you!' fiercely responded mademoiselle.

'Every one to his own liking,' carelessly remarked Herbert. 'It's well for me that all the world does not think as you do, mademoiselle.'

Mademoiselle looked as though she would like to beat him. 'So!' she foamed, drawing back her bloodless lips, 'now that your turn is served, Bianca Varsini may just be sent to the enfer! Garde-toi, mon camarade, je te dis.'

'Garde your voice,' replied Herbert. 'The cows yonder will think it's thundering. I wish my turn *was* served, in more ways than one. What particular turn do you mean? If it's the buying of Tasso, I'll purchase it from you at full price.'

He could not help giving her a little chaff. It was what he would have called it—chaff. Exacting people fretted his generally easy temper, and he was beginning to fear that she would detain him until it was too late to see Anna.

But, on the latter score, he was set at rest. With a few words, spoken in Italian, she nodded her head angrily at him, and turned away. Fierce

words, in spite of their low tone, Herbert was sure, but he could not catch one of them. Had he caught them all, it would have been the same, so far as his understanding went. Excellent as the Signora Varsini's method of teaching Italian may have been, her lessons had not as yet been very efficient for Herbert Dare.

She crossed her hands before her, and went down the walk, taking the cross path to the house. Proceeding straight up to the school-room, she met Cyril on the stairs. He had apparently been dressing himself for the evening, and was going abroad to spend it. The governess caught abrupt hold of him, pulled him inside the school-room, and closed the door.

'I say, mademoiselle, what's that for?' asked Cyril, believing, by the fierce look of the young lady, that she was about to take some summary vengeance upon him.

'Cyril! you tell me. Where is it that Herbert goes to of an evening? Every evening—every evening?'

Cyril stared excessively. 'What does it concern you to know where he goes, mademoiselle?' returned he.

'I want to know for my own reasons, and that's enough for you, Monsieur Cyril. Where does he go?'

'He goes out,' responded Cyril.

The governess stamped her foot, petulantly. 'I could tell you that he goes out. I ask you where it is that he goes?'

'How should I know?' was Cyril's answer. 'It's not my business.'

'*Don't* you know?' demanded mademoiselle.

'No; that I don't,' heartily spoke Cyril. 'Do you suppose I watch him, mademoiselle? He'd pretty soon pitch into me, if he caught me at that game. I dare say he goes to billiards.'

The supposition excited the ire of the governess. 'He has been telling you to say so!' she said, menace in every tone of her voice, in every gesture of her lifted hand.

Cyril opened his eyes to their utmost width. He could not comprehend why the governess should be asking him this, or why Herbert's movements should concern her. 'I know nothing at all about it,' he answered; and, so far, he spoke the truth. 'I don't know that Herbert goes anywhere particular in an evening. If he does, he does not tell me.'

She laid her hand heavily upon his shoulder; she brought her face—a sight to be seen in its livid earnestness—nearly in contact with his. 'Ecoutez, mon ami!' she whispered to the amazed Cyril. 'If you are going to play this game with me, I will play one upon you. Who wore the cloak to that boucherie, and got the money?—who ripped out the écossais side afterwards, leaving it all mangled and open? Think you, I don't know? Ah, ha! Monsieur Cyril, you cannot play the farce with me!'

Cyril's face turned of a ghastly whiteness, the

drops of sweat breaking out over his forehead. 'Hush!' he cried, looking round, in the instinct of terror, lest listeners should be at hand.

'Yes; you say, "Hush!"' she resumed. 'I will hush if you don't make me speak. I have hushed ever since. You tell me what I want to know, and I'll hush always.'

'Mademoiselle Varsini,' he cried, his manner too painfully earnest for her to doubt now that he spoke the truth, 'I declare that I know nothing of Herbert's movements. I don't know where he goes or what he does. When I told you I thought he went to billiards, I said what I thought might be the case. He may go to fifty places of an evening, for all I can tell. Tell me what it is you want found out, and I will try and do it.'

Cyril was not one to play the spy upon his brother; in fact, as he had just classically observed to the young lady, Herbert would have 'pitched into' him, had he found him attempting it. And serve him right! But Cyril saw that he was in her power; and that made all the difference. He would have tracked Herbert to the end of the earth at her bidding now.

But she did not bid him. Quite the contrary. She took her hand off Cyril's shoulder, opened the door, and said she did not want him any longer. 'It is no matter,' cried she; 'I wanted to learn something about Monsieur Herbert, for a reason; but if you do not know it, let it pass. It is no matter.'

Cyril departed; first of all lifting his coward face. It looked a coward's then. 'You'll keep counsel, mademoiselle?'

'Yes. When people don't offend me, I don't offend them.'

She stood at the door, after he had gone down, half in, half out of the room, apparently in deep thought. Presently footsteps were heard coming up, and she retreated and closed the door.

They were those of Herbert. He went on to his room, remained there a few minutes, and then came out again. Mademoiselle had got the door ajar as he descended. Her quick eye detected that he had been giving a few finishing touches to his toilette—brushing his hair, pulling down his wristbands, besides various other little odds and ends.

'And you do that to play at billiards!' nodded she inwardly, as she looked after him. 'I'll see, monsieur.'

Up-stairs with a soft step went she, to her own chamber. She reached from her box a long and loose dark-green cloak, like those worn by the women of France and Flanders, and a black silk quilted bonnet. It was her travelling attire, and she put it on now. Then she locked her chamber door behind her, and slipped down into the dining-room, with as soft a step as she had gone up.

Passing out at the open window, she kept tolerably under cover of the trees, and gained the

road. It was quite dusk then, but she recognized Herbert before her, walking with a quick step. She put on a quick step, also, keeping a convenient distance between herself and him. He went right through the town, to the London road, and struck into Atterly's field. The governess struck into it after him.

There she stopped under the hedge, to reconnoitre. A few minutes, and she could distinguish that he was joined by some young girl, whom he met with every token of respect and confidence. A strange cry went forth on the evening air.

Herbert Dare was startled. 'What noise was that?' he exclaimed.

Anna had heard nothing. 'It must have been one of the lambs in the field, Herbert.'

'It was more like a human voice in pain,' observed Herbert. But they heard no more.

They began their usual walk—a few paces backward and forward, underneath the most sheltered part of the hedge, Anna taking his arm. Mademoiselle could see, as well as the darkness allowed her; but she could not hear. Her face, peeping out of the shadowy bonnet, was not unlike the face of a tiger.

She crawled away. She had noticed as she turned into the field, an iron gate that led into the garden, which the hedge skirted. She crept round to it, found it locked, and mounted it. It had spikes on the top, but the signora would not have cared just then, had she found herself im-

paled. She got safe over it; and then she considered how to reach the spot where they stood, without their hearing her.

Would she be baffled? *She* be baffled! No. She stooped down, unlaced her boots, and stole softly on in her stockings. And there she was! nearly as close to them as they were to each other.

Where had the signora heard those gentle, timid tones before? A lovely girl, looking little more than a child, in her modest Quaker dress, arose to her mind's eye. She has seen her with Miss Ashley. She—the signora—knelt down on the earth, the better to catch what was said.

'Listeners never hear any good of themselves.' It is a proverb too often exemplified; as the signora could have told that night. Herbert Dare was accounting for his late appearance, which he laid to the charge of the governess. He gave a description of the interview she had volunteered him in the garden at home—more ludicrous, perhaps, than true, but certainly not complimentary to the signora. Anna laughed; and the lady on the other side gathered that this was not the first time she had formed a topic of merriment for them. You should have seen her face. Pour plaisir, as she herself might have said.

She stayed the interview out. When it was over, and Herbert Dare had departed, she put on her boots and mounted the gate again; but she was not so agile this time, and a spike entered her wrist. Binding her handkerchief round it, to

stop the blood, she returned to Pomeranian Knoll.

Five hundred questions were showered upon her when she entered the drawing-room, looking calm and impassible as ever. Not a tress of her elaborate braids of hair was out of place; not a fold awry in her dress. Much wonder had been excited by her non-appearance at tea: Minny had drummed a waltz on her chamber door, but mademoiselle would not open it, and would not speak.

'I cannot speak when I am lying down with those *vilaine* headaches,' remarked mademoiselle.

'Have you a headache, mademoiselle?' asked Mrs. Dare. 'Will you have a cup of tea brought up?'

Mademoiselle declined the tea. She was not thirsty.

'What have you done to your wrist, mademoiselle?' called out Herbert, who was stretched on a sofa, at the far end of the room.

'My wrist? Oh, I scratched it.'

'How did you manage that?'

'Ah, bah! it's nothing,' responded mademoiselle.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE QUARREL.

It is a grievous thing, when ill-feeling arises between brothers, that that ill-feeling should be cherished, instead of being subdued. But such was the case with Anthony and Herbert Dare. By the time that the sunny month of May came in, matters had grown to that pitch between them, that Mr. Dare found himself compelled to interfere. It was beginning to make things in the house uncomfortable. They would meet at meals, and not only abstain from speaking to each other, but take every possible opportunity of showing mutual and marked discourtesy. No positive outbreak between them had as yet taken place in the presence of the family; but it was only smouldering, and might be daily looked for.

Mr. Dare, so far as the original cause went, blamed his eldest son. There was no question that Anthony had been solely in fault. It was a dishonourable, ungenerous, unmanly act, to draw his brother into trouble, and to do it plausibly and deceitfully. At the *present* stage of the affair,

Mr. Dare saw occasion to blame Herbert more than Anthony. 'It is you who keep up the ball, Herbert,' he said to him. 'If you would suffer the matter to die away, Anthony would.' 'Of course he would,' Herbert replied. 'He has got his turn served, and would be glad that it should end there.'

It was in vain that Mr. Dare talked to them. A dozen times did he recommend them to 'shake hands and make it up.' Neither appeared inclined to take the advice. Anthony was sullen. He would have been content to let the affair drop quietly into oblivion; perhaps, as Herbert said, had been glad that it should so drop; but, make the slightest move towards it, he would not. Herbert openly said that *he'd* not shake hands. If Anthony wanted him ever to shake hands with him again, let him pay up.

There lay the grievance; the 'paying up.' The bills, not paid, were a terrible thorn in the side of Herbert Dare. He was responsible, and he knew not one hour from another but he might be arrested on them. To soothe matters between his sons, Mr. Dare would willingly have taken the charge of payment upon himself, but he had positively not the money to do it with. In point of fact, Mr. Dare was growing seriously embarrassed on his own score. He had had a great deal of trouble with his sons, with Anthony in particular, and he had grown sick and tired of helping them out of pecuniary difficulties. Still, he would have re-

lieved Herbert of this one nightmare, had it been in his power. Herbert had been deluded into it, without any benefit to himself; therefore Mr. Dare's will was good, could he have managed it, to help him out. He told Herbert that he would see what he could do after a while. The promise did not relieve Herbert of present fears; neither did it restore peace between the malcontents. Had Herbert been relieved of that particular embarrassment, plenty more would have remained to him; but that fact did not in the least lessen his soreness, as to the one.

It was an intensely hot day; far hotter than is customary at the season; and the afternoon sun streamed full on the windows of Pomeranian Knoll, suggesting thoughts of July, instead of May. A gay party—at any rate, a party dressed in gay attire—were crossing the hall to enter a carriage that waited at the door. Mr. Dare, Mrs. Dare, and Adelaide. Mrs. Dare had always been given to gay attire, and her daughters had caught the taste from her. They were going to dine at a friend's house, a few miles' distance from Helstonleigh. The invitation was for seven o'clock. It was now striking six, the dinner-hour at Mr. Dare's.

Minny, looking half melted, had perched herself upon the end of the balustrades to watch the departure.

'You'll fall, child,' said Mr. Dare.

Minny laughed, and said there was no danger

of her falling. She wondered what her papa would think, did he see her sometimes at her gymnastics on the balustrades, taking a sweeping slide on them from the top to the bottom. She generally contrived that he should not see her; or mademoiselle, either. Mademoiselle had caught sight of the performance once, and had given her a whole French fable to learn, by way of punishment.

'Are we to have any strawberries for dinner, mamma?' asked Minny.

'You will have what I have thought proper to order,' replied Mrs. Dare, in rather a sharp tone. She was feeling hot and cross. Something had put her out while dressing.

'I think you might wait for strawberries until they are ripe in our own garden; not buy them in the shops without any regard to cost,' interposed Mr. Dare, speaking for the general benefit, but not to any one in particular.

Minny dropped the subject. 'Your dress is turned up, Adelaide,' said she.

Adelaide looked languidly behind her, and a maid, who had followed them downstairs, advanced, and put to rights the refractory dress; a handsome dress of pink, glistening with its own richness. At that moment Anthony entered the hall. He had just come home to dinner, and looked in a very ill-humour.

'How late you'll be!' he cried.

'Not at all. We shall get there in an hour.'

They swept out at the door, Mrs. Dare and Adelaide. Mr. Dare was about to follow them, when a sudden thought appeared to strike him, and he turned back and addressed Anthony.

'You young men take care that you don't get quarrelling with each other. Do you hear, Anthony?'

'I hear,' ungraciously replied Anthony, not turning round to speak, but continuing his way upstairs to his dressing-room. He probably regarded the injunction with slighting contempt, for it was too much in Anthony Dare's nature so to regard all advice, of whatever kind. Nevertheless, it had been well that he had paid heed to it. It had been well that that last word to his father had been one of affection!

The dinner was served. Anthony, in the absence of Mr. and Mrs. Dare, taking the head. Rosa, with a show of great parade and ceremony, assumed the seat opposite to him, and said she should be mistress. Minny responded that Rosa was not going to be mistress over *her*, and the governess desired Miss Rosa not to talk so loud. Rather derogatory checks, these, to the dignity of a 'mistress.'

Herbert was not at table. Irregular as the young Dares were in many of their habits, they were generally home for dinner. Minny wondered aloud where Herbert was. Anthony replied that he was 'skulking.'

'Skulking!' echoed Minny.

'Yes, skulking,' angrily repeated Anthony. 'He quitted the office at three o'clock, and has never been near it since. And the governor left at four!' he added, in a tone that seemed to say he considered that also a grievance.

'Where did Herbert go to?' asked Rosa.

'I don't know,' responded Anthony. 'I only know that I had a double share of work to do.'

Anthony Dare was no friend to work. And the having had to do a little more than he would have done, had Herbert remained at his post, had aggravated his temper considerably.

'Why should Monsieur Herbert go away and leave you his work to do?' inquired the governess, lifting her eyes from her plate to Anthony.

'I shall take care to ask him why,' returned Anthony.

'It is not fair that he should,' continued mademoiselle. 'I'd not have done it for him, Monsieur Anthony.'

'Neither should I, had I not been obliged,' said Anthony, not in the least relaxing from his ill-humour, either of looks or tone. 'It was work that had to be done before post time, and one of our clerks is away on business to-day.'

The dinner proceeded to its close. Joseph hesitated, unwilling to remove the cloth. 'Is it to be left on for Mr. Herbert?' he asked.

'No!' imperiously answered Anthony. 'If he cannot come in for dinner, dinner shall not be kept for him.'

'Cook is keeping the things hot, sir.'

'Then tell her to save herself the trouble.'

So the cloth was removed, and the dessert put on. To Minny's inexpressible disappointment, it turned out that there were no strawberries. This put *her* in an ill-humour, and she quitted the table and the room, declaring she would not touch anything else. Mademoiselle Varsini called her back, and ordered her to her seat; she would not permit so great a breach of discipline. Cyril and George, who were not under the control of mademoiselle, gulped down a glass of wine, and hastened out to keep an engagement. It was a very innocent one; a great match at cricket had been organised for the evening, by some of the old college boys; and Cyril and George were amongst the players. It has never been mentioned that Mr. Ashley, in his strict sense of justice, had allowed to Cyril the privilege of spending his evenings at home, five nights in the week, as he did to William Halliburton.

The rest remained at table. Minny, per force; Rosa, to eat an unlimited quantity of oranges; Mademoiselle Varsini, because it was the custom to remain. But mademoiselle soon rose and withdrew with her pupils; Anthony was not showing himself to be a particularly sociable companion. He had not touched the dessert; but seemed to be drinking a good deal of wine.

As they were going out of the room, Herbert bustled in. 'Now then, take care!' cried he: for

Minny, paying little attention to her way, had gone full butt at him.

'Oh! Herbert, can't you see?' cried she, dolefully, rubbing her head. 'What made you so late? The dinner's gone away.'

'It can be brought in again,' replied Herbert, carelessly. '*Comme il est chaud! n'est-ce pas, mademoiselle?*'

This last was addressed to the governess. Rosa screamed out with laughter at his bad French, and mademoiselle smiled. 'You get on in French like you do in Italian, Monsieur Herbert,' cried she. 'And that is what you call—backward.'

Herbert laughed good-humouredly. He did not know what particular mistake he had made; truth to say, he did not care. They withdrew, and he rang the bell for his dinner.

'Mind, Herbert,' cried Minny, putting in her head again at the door, 'papa said you were not to quarrel.'

Better, perhaps, that she had not said it! Who can tell?

The brothers remained alone. Anthony sullen, and, as yet, silent. He appeared to have emptied the port wine decanter, and to be beginning at the sherry! Herbert strolled past him; supreme indifference in his manner—some might have said contempt—and stood just outside the window whistling.

You have not forgotten that this dining-room window opened to the ground. The apartment

was long and somewhat narrow, the window large and high, and opening in the middle, after the manner of a French one. The door was at one end of the room! the window at the other.

Anthony was in too quarrelsome a mood to remain silent long. He began the skirmish by demanding what Herbert meant by absenting himself from the office for the afternoon, and where he had been. His resentful tone, his authoritative words, not being calculated to win any very civil answer.

They did not win one from Herbert. *His* tone was resentful, too; his words were coolly aggravating. Anthony was not his master; when he was, he might, perhaps, answer him. Such was their purport.

A hot interchange of words ensued. Nothing more. Anthony remained at the table; Herbert, half in, half out at the window, leaning against its frame. When Joseph returned to put things in readiness for Herbert's dinner, they had subsided into quietness. It was but a lull in the storm.

Joseph placed the dessert nearer Anthony's end of the table, and laid his cloth across the other end. Herbert came inside the room. 'What a time you are with the dinner, Joseph!' cried he. 'One would think it was being cooked.'

'Cook's warming it, sir.'

'Warming it!' echoed Herbert. 'Why couldn't she have kept it warm? She might be sure I should be home to dinner.'

'She was keeping it warm, sir, but Mr. Anthony ordered it to be put away.'

Now, the man had really no intention of making mischief, when he said this: that it might cause ill blood between the brothers, never crossed his mind. He was only anxious that he and his fellow-servant, the cook, should stand free of blame. For the young Dares, when displeased with the servants, were not in the habit of sparing them. Herbert turned to Anthony.

'What business have you to interfere with my dinner? Or with anything else that concerns me?'

'I choose to make it my business,' insolently retorted Anthony.

At this juncture Joseph left the room. He had finished laying the cloth, and had no cause to stop in it. Better perhaps that he had stopped! Surely they would not have proceeded to extremities, the brothers, before their servant! In a short while, sounds, as if both were in a terrible state of fury, resounded through the house from the dining-room. The sounds did not reach the kitchen, which was partially detached from the house; but the young ladies heard them, and came running out of the drawing-room.

The governess was in the school-room. The noise penetrated even there. She also came forth, and saw her two pupils extended over the balustrades, listening. At any other time mademoiselle would have reproved them: now, she crept down and leaned over in company.

'What can be the matter?' whispered she.

'Papa told them not to quarrel!' was all the answer, uttered by Minny.

It was a terrible quarrel; there was little doubt of that; no child's play. Passionate bursts of fury rose incessantly, now from one, now from the other, now from both. Hot recrimination; words that were not fitted for unaccustomed ears—or for any ears, for the matter of that—rose high and loud. The governess turned pale, and Minny burst into tears.

'Somebody ought to go into the room,' said Rosa. 'Minny, you go! Tell them to be quiet.'

'I am afraid,' replied Minny.

'So am I.'

A fearful sound. An explosion louder than all the rest. A noise as if some heavy weight had been thrown down. Had it come to blows? Minny shrieked aloud, and at the same moment Joseph was seen coming along with a tray, and Herbert's hot dinner upon it.

His presence seemed to impart a sense of courage, and Rosa and Minny flew down, followed by the governess. Herbert had been knocked down by Anthony. He was gathering himself up when Joseph opened the door. Gathering himself up in a tempest of passion: his white face one living fury, as he caught hold of a knife from the table and rushed upon Anthony.

But Joseph was too quick for him. The man dashed his tray on the table, seized hold of Her-

bert, and turned the uplifted knife downwards. 'For Heaven's sake, sir, recollect yourself!' said he.

Recollect himself then? No. Persons, who put themselves into that mad state of passion, cannot 'recollect' themselves. Joseph kept fast his hold, and the dining-room became alive with shrieks; with sobbing tears.

They proceeded from Rosa and Minny. They pulled their brothers by the coats, they implored, they entreated. The women servants came flying from the kitchen, and the Italian governess asked the two gentlemen in French whether they were not ashamed of themselves.

Perhaps they were. At any rate, the quarrel was, for the time, put a stop to. Herbert flung the knife upon the table, and turned his white face, savage still, upon his brother.

'Take care of yourself, though!' cried he, in a marked tone. 'I swear you shall have it, yet.'

They pulled Anthony out of the room, Rosa and Minny; or it is difficult to say what rejoinder he might have made, or how violently the quarrel might have been renewed. It was certain that he had taken more wine than was good for him: and that, generally speaking, did not improve the temper of Anthony Dare. Mademoiselle Varsini walked by his side, talking volubly in French. Whether she was sympathising or scolding, Anthony did not know. Not particularly bright at understanding French at the best of times, even

when spoken slowly, he could not, in his present excitement, catch the meaning of a single word. Entering the drawing-room, he threw himself upon the sofa, intending to smooth down his ruffled plumage by taking a nap.

Herbert meanwhile had remained in the dining-room, smoothing down *his* ruffled plumage. Joseph and the cook were bending over the *débris* on the carpet. When Joseph dashed down his tray on the table, the dish of potatoes had bounded *off;* thereby, both dish and potatoes, coming to grief. Herbert sat down and made a good dinner. His was not a sullen temper; and, unlike Anthony, the affair once over, he was soon himself again. Should they come in contact again directly, there was no telling how it might be, or what might ensue. His dinner over, he went by-and-by to the drawing-room. Joseph had just entered, and was arousing Anthony from the sleep he had dropped into.

'One of the waiters from the Star-and-Garter has come, sir. He says Lord Hawkesley has sent him to say that the gentlemen are waiting for you.'

'I can't go, tell him,' responded Anthony, speaking as he looked, thoroughly out of sorts. 'I am not going out to-night. Here! Joseph!' for the man was turning away with the message.

'Sir?'

'Take these, and bring me my slippers.'

'These' were his boots, which he, not very po-

litely, kicked off in the ladies' presence, and sent them flying after Joseph. The man stooped to pick them up, and was carrying them away.

'Here!—what a hurry you are in!' began Anthony again. 'Take lights up to my chamber, and the brandy, and some cold water. I shall make myself comfortable there for the night. This room's unbearable, with its present company.'

The last was a shaft levelled at Herbert. He did not retort, for a wonder. In fact Anthony afforded little time for it. Before the words had well left his lips, he had quitted the room. Herbert began to whistle; its very tone an insolent one.

It appeared nearly certain that the unpleasantness was not yet over; and Rosa audibly wished her papa was at home. Joseph carried to Anthony's room what he required, and then brought the tea to the drawing-room. Herbert said he should take tea with them. It was rather unusual for him to do so: it was very unusual for Anthony not to go out. Their sisters felt sure that they were only staying in to renew hostilities; and again Rosa almost passionately wished for the presence of her father.

It was dusk by the time tea was over. Herbert rose to leave the room. 'Where are you going?' cried out mademoiselle, sharply, after him.

'That's my business,' he replied, not in too conciliatory a tone. Perhaps he took the question to

proceed from one of his sisters, for he was outside the door when it reached him.

'He is going into Anthony's room!' cried Rosa, turning very pale, as they heard him run upstairs. 'Oh, mademoiselle! what can be done? I think I'll call Joseph.'

'Hush!' cried mademoiselle. 'Wait you still here. I will go and see.'

She stole out of the room and up the stairs, intending to reconnoitre. But she had no time. Herbert was coming down again, and she could only slip inside the school-room door, and peep out. He had evidently been upstairs for his cloak, for he was putting it on as he descended.

'The cloak on a hot night like this!" said mademoiselle mentally. 'He must want to disguise himself!'

She stopped to listen. Joseph had come up the stairs, bringing something to Anthony, and Herbert arrested him, speaking in a low tone.

'Don't let there be any mistake to-night about the dining-room window, Joseph. I can't think how you could have been so stupid last night!'

'Sir, I assure you I left it undone, as usual,' replied Joseph. 'It must have been master who fastened it.'

'Well, take care that it does not occur,' said Herbert. 'I expect to be in between ten and eleven; but I may be later, and I don't want to ring you up again.'

Herbert went swiftly down the stairs, and out

choosing his egress by the way, as it appeared, that he intended to enter—the dining-room window. Joseph proceeded to Anthony's chamber; and the governess returned to her frightened pupils in the drawing-room.

'*A la bonne heure!*' she said to them. 'Monsieur Herbert is gone out, and I heard him say to Joseph that he was gone for the evening.'

'Then it's all safe!' cried Minny. And she began dancing round the room in her gladness. 'Mademoiselle, how pale you look!'

Mademoiselle had sat down in her place before the tea-tray, and was leaning her cheek upon her hand. She was certainly looking unusually pale. 'Enough to make me!' she said, in answer to Minny. 'If there were to be this disturbance often in the house, I would not stop in it for double my *appointement*. It has given me one of those *vilaine* headaches, and I think I shall go to bed. You will not be afraid to stay up alone, mesdemoiselles?'

'There is nothing to be afraid of now,' promptly answered Rosa, who had far rather be without her governess's company than with it. 'Don't sit up for us, mademoiselle.'

'Then I will go at once,' said mademoiselle. And she wished them good night, and retired to her chamber.

END OF VOL. II.

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